TESOL Teacher Education in a Globalised World: 
The Case of Vietnamese Teachers of English

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Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another.

MAI NGUYEN
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“When you really want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it.”

Paulo Coelho

This research would not have been possible without the strong network of support that I was very fortunate to have throughout the duration of my PhD studies. Upon completion of this memorable journey, I would like to thank the following people who, to me, are perfect representations of ‘conspired help from the universe’.

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TO ALL, THANK YOU!
This research examines the professional experience of Vietnamese TESOL teachers who previously underwent professional training in two types of Master’s level TESOL programs: those offered by institutions of one of the Inner-Circle countries (e.g., USA, UK, Australia, New Zealand) in these countries (overseas programs), and programs offered by Inner-Circle institutions in association with a Vietnamese institution in Vietnam (localised programs). These programs were chosen as the research is situated in the context of TESOL becoming a globalised field, partly demonstrated in the mobility of teachers and teacher training programs. The impacts of previous TESOL training are investigated through three main lenses believed to encompass different current aspects of TESOL teachers’ professional experience, and which reflect the training content and aims of contemporary TESOL teacher education programs. The three lenses are teachers’ beliefs toward various issues related to the teaching of English as an International Language (TEIL), their autonomy in teaching practice, and their satisfaction with the teaching job.

Adopting a sequential explanatory mixed methods design, the present study involves the participation of 85 Vietnamese English language teachers who were trained in either an overseas or a localised TESOL program. Two-thirds of the participants were working at public higher education institutions in Vietnam at the time of the study, and the rest were teachers of private educational organisations. An online survey was first delivered to all participants to garner data on their beliefs about TEIL, their perceptions toward autonomy in teaching practice, and their work satisfaction level. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were then carried out with 20 of them to obtain further clarifications and deeper information about the researched issues. Additionally, teaching observation sessions and retrospective interviews were conducted with three overseas-trained teachers to provide further evidence of their teaching autonomy.

In terms of teacher beliefs about aspects of TEIL, it was revealed that post-training, both overseas- and localised-trained teachers had an increased awareness of the pluricentricity of English, the importance of teaching both Anglophone and non-Anglophone cultures, and understanding of the larger social, cultural, and political context of teaching. The study also found that teacher education programs played a significant role in modifying
teacher beliefs, such as strengthening, disproving, and reconstructing existing beliefs, or shaping new beliefs. It also uncovered aspects of TEIL where teacher education could exert more impact, such as the construct of language teacher proficiency, and the risk of over-relying on Western teaching methodologies.

Regarding autonomy in teaching practice, teachers in both program types demonstrated a medium level of autonomy in their teaching, with the level of autonomy in general aspects of teaching (e.g., deciding on teaching methods and learning activities) being greater than that of curricular aspects (e.g., selecting learning content and materials). Noticeably, teacher education programs were found to provide them with professional knowledge and ideas that they could use to innovate their everyday teaching activities, and to a certain extent allowed them to be autonomous learners. However, they did not seem to provide teachers with much assistance in dealing with curricular constraints, nor inspire them to create spaces for more teaching autonomy.

Finally, the teachers’ level of satisfaction with their teaching job was found to vary depending on various aspects. They were most satisfied with intrinsic aspects of the job and the relationships with their students, colleagues, and supervisors, and were less satisfied with aspects related to institutional support (e.g., autonomy given to teachers, recognition of teaching accomplishments), and professional standing (e.g., promotion and salary). Influence of training seemed most evident in how the teachers were positively seen and welcomed by their supervisors, students, and colleagues when they returned, and, in the case of teachers taking overseas programs, how the overseas living and study experience added enjoyment and stimulation to their perception of the teaching profession.

These findings confirm the role of TESOL teacher education in enriching the overall professional lives of practising TESOL teachers. On the other hand, they reveal tensions resultant from mismatches between Inner-Circle-based curricula and training approaches and the local Vietnamese context where the teachers returned to teach. The research has important implications for stakeholders involved in the professional development of non-Inner-Circle TESOL teachers in the current globalised world.

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<tr>
<td>TESOL</td>
<td>Teaching English to speakers of other languages</td>
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<td>MA TESOL</td>
<td>Master of Arts in TESOL</td>
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<tr>
<td>SLTE</td>
<td>Second language teacher education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BANA</td>
<td>Britain, Australasia, and North America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TESEP</td>
<td>Tertiary, secondary, and primary sectors</td>
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<tr>
<td>NNEST</td>
<td>Non-native English-speaking teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>EIL</td>
<td>English as an international language</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEIL</td>
<td>Teaching English as an international language</td>
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<tr>
<td>CLT</td>
<td>Communicative language teaching</td>
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<td>NFL2020</td>
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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1. Foreword

My interest in researching second language teacher education had its roots in quite personal reasons. Nearly four years ago, just before I departed for Australia to start my PhD journey, my father showed me a copy of a neatly hand-written doctoral research proposal that he wrote almost twenty-five years ago for a PhD he never had the opportunity to complete. Back in the early 1980s, my father was a lecturer in Vietnamese literature at a teacher training college in central Vietnam. Well-versed in his study area, he was among the few scholars who were about to be sent to Eastern Europe for higher degree training. While in Hanoi (the capital city) to take the final compulsory exams before departure, my father received a phone call from my mother, who was in tears as she broke the news to him, that my grandmother had just passed away. Left without a better option, my father decided to abandon his career dream and caught the earliest train home to take care of his young wife and newborn child, who was me at the time, and to see my grandmother one last time. I am not sure if it is a coincidence or destiny, but my father’s PhD proposal was also in the area of teacher education, to be more exact, Vietnamese language teacher education. In retrospect, as I was growing up, his passion for the teaching profession and dedication to the noble job of educating teachers must have had an indelible impact on me. The story of my father with his unaccomplished PhD dream and the sacrifice he made for our family was an invaluable source of motivation for me to pursue further studies in teacher education. In researching teacher education, I am happy that I am living my dream of becoming a competent teacher educator, and it makes me even happier knowing that what I am doing is, in one way or another, a continuation of my father’s dream. We both are keen knowledge seekers, language teachers, and teacher educators.

In addition, my experience in training preservice English teachers during my teaching in Vietnam laid an important foundation for my inquiry into the efficacy of English teacher education. While working as a teacher educator who trained school-level English teachers, I always felt double responsibility: I wanted my teacher trainees to be able to teach well not only for their own professional development, but more importantly, for the benefits of their future students. What often concerned me, however, was how
effective TESOL teacher training courses were in preparing future teachers for the teaching job, as after graduation, we often had too little contact with or information about our trainees to know how well they did in their actual teaching. Later as I had the opportunity to travel abroad for training in TESOL at an Australian university, this concern grew larger and assumed added layers of complexity. While in the Australian MA TESOL program, I was eager to absorb as much as I could the knowledge and skills pertaining to various aspects of English teaching theories, methodology, and research. I was certain that these professional gains would be useful for my teaching and research. Upon returning to teach in the Vietnamese context, it became clear to me that the knowledge and skills learnt from the TESOL program did contribute to a significant growth in my professional knowledge and improvement in my teaching performance. Nonetheless, the tension that resulted from having to negotiate between a desire to improve teaching and learning quality and numerous constraints embedded in my local teaching context was real to me. This therefore led me to look further into the efficacy concern of English teacher education at the Master’s level, particularly with teachers who were trained in Anglophone environments or following Anglophone-influenced curricula, and later returned to teach in locally-bound settings.

Taking the above-stated inquiry as a point of departure, I decided to conduct my PhD research to find answers to an overarching question: “How do Anglophone-oriented teacher education programs impact on the professional experience of non-Anglophone English teachers in post-training periods?”. The sections that follow will introduce the background, aims, key inquiries, and significance of the present study.

1.2. Background of the study

The earliest history of teaching English as a second or foreign language can be traced back to the 15th century, when the first English learning material was introduced in England in the form of manuals used for teaching English to French merchants (Braine, 2005; Howatt, 1984). The teaching and learning of English started to gain increasing popularity during the 16th century due to the expansion of the British Empire. Between those early days and the present time, English has experienced exponential growth and thus has now achieved the status of a ‘global language’, whereby around 26 percent of the world’s population (approximately two billion people) is estimated to speak English either as a first or a second language (Crystal, 2011; Ethnologue, 2017). This inevitably results in the development of English language teaching in many countries across the world (Braine, 2005; Freeman & Richards, 1996; Richards, 2008; Richards & Rodgers,
Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), therefore, has become a profession that attracts much concern and interest.

Coupled with issues related to the actual process of teaching and learning the target language, English teacher education is an area that has, in the last few decades, drawn great attention in the English language teaching (ELT) world (Barkhuizen & Borg, 2010; Borg, 2006; Burns & Richards, 2009; Freeman & Richards, 1996; Freeman, 2016; Richards, 2008; Richards & Nunan, 1990). This is even more the case if one takes into consideration the current trend of globalisation in TESOL teacher education, partly demonstrated in the mobility of teachers and teacher education programs. Nowadays, an increasing number of English teachers from non-English speaking backgrounds have been enrolled, and will undoubtedly continue to enroll, in training programs offered by institutions in native English-speaking Inner-Circle countries (Kachru, 1985) such as the UK, USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (see Braine, 2010; Canagarajah, 2012; Chowdhury & Phan, 2008, 2014; Govardhan, Nayar, & Sheorey, 1999; Kanno, 2003; Liyanage & Barlett, 2008; Pavlenko, 2003; Phan, 2007). Most of these programs are offered in these Inner-Circle countries; additionally, many Inner-Circle universities are now expanding their sphere of influence and offer their TESOL courses in the students’ home countries, either on their own or in conjunction with a local institution (Dobinson & Mercieca, 2012; Stracke, 2012). This phenomenon has sparked concerns over the quality and impact of TESOL training programs, most of which have to do with their praxis level, which primarily refers to whether these courses adequately prepare their teacher learners for teaching in their particular educational settings, and the extent to which these teachers are able to transfer and transform the knowledge they have learnt to their teaching practice, especially in the context of English now becoming an international language (Holliday, 2005; Kirkpatrick, 2007, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014; McKay, 2002; Phan, 2008). Moreover, these concerns are exacerbated given the difference between the local linguistic, pedagogical and sociocultural settings where teachers live and work, and those in which they undergo their training (Dogancay-Aktuna & Hardman, 2012; K. Johnson, 2009; Liyanage & Barlett, 2008). Teachers undertaking these programs are normally trained in Inner-Circle contexts, or are exposed to Inner-Circle-influenced curricula, where an integrationist approach to education is usually observed (Holliday, 1994): Teaching tends to be learner-centered and skills-based, and there is maneuverability within the curriculum. But post-training, their local context is more frequently collectionist (Nunan & Lamb, 1996), characterised by subject-centredness,
structured learning and strict adherence to a curriculum. This makes the task of judging how TESOL teacher education impacts on teacher practice further complicated, and worthy of exploring.

1.3. Statement of problem

Despite a growing body of research on MA TESOL teacher programs in recent years (see Chowdhury, 2003; Chowdhury & Phan, 2008, 2014; Govardhan et al., 1999; Liyanage & Barlett, 2008; Kamhi-Stein, 2000; McKnight & Turner, 1995; Stapleton & Shao, 2016; Yeh, 2011), there is still considerable room for further investigation. First, much of this research has examined the experience of teacher participants during the time they were in the training programs (Chowdhury & Phan, 2008; Liyanage & Barlett, 2008; Kamhi-Stein, 2000; McKnight & Turner, 1995); little is known about these teachers’ praxis experience after they have returned to their local teaching contexts. Second, previous studies that specifically addressed the effectiveness of TESOL teacher education (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Park, 2012; Liyanage & Barlett, 2008) mainly investigated general student experience, rather than focusing on specific constructs related to teachers’ professional lives. It is thus important to explore language teacher education outcomes from the perspective of constructs that are central to the act of teaching and are potential indicators of the impact of training, as will be fulfilled in the present study. Third, most existing studies have focused on evaluating the effectiveness of TESOL courses offered by Inner-Circle institutions and based in Inner-Circle countries. There is little in the way of research on programs offered by Inner-Circle institutions but based in the students’ home countries. Given this situation, there is even less work on how different types of TESOL programs might compare with each other in terms of their impact and effectiveness. Finally, regarding methodological concerns, a majority of research in this area has been qualitative; participants were mostly involved in interviews, journal writing, and observations as crucial means for data collection. Quantitative studies have been rare. All of this warrants the need for research on the post-training professional experience of TESOL teachers who underwent Master’s level studies in different types of TESOL programs using integrative conceptual lenses, and a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research instruments.
1.4. Research aims

This research explores the professional experience of TESOL teachers from an Expanding Circle country after they had completed different types of TESOL programs. More specifically, it investigates the teaching beliefs, autonomy in teaching practice, and work satisfaction of Vietnamese TESOL teachers who received professional training in two types of Master’s level coursework TESOL programs, namely: those offered by institutions of one of the Inner-Circle countries (e.g., USA, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand) in their countries (overseas programs); and those offered by Inner-Circle institutions in conjunction with a Vietnamese institution (localised programs). The teachers’ professional experience will specifically be examined through the concepts of teacher beliefs (Borg, 2006, 2009a), teacher autonomy (Benson, 2006; McGrath, 2000), and teacher work satisfaction (Dinham & Scott, 1998; Pennington, 1991). The aims are:

1) to describe and compare the teaching experience of overseas- and localised-trained TESOL teachers in post-training periods in terms of their teaching beliefs, classroom teaching realities, and aspects of their professional development, particularly work satisfaction.

2) to explore the impacts of these training programs on teacher cognition and practice and make comparisons across the two types of training programs

3) to provide useful insights and recommendations to improve the practicality and effectiveness of TESOL teacher education programs.

1.5. Research questions

To achieve the above-stated aims, this research addresses three main sets of questions:

1. How does participation in overseas and localised TESOL programs impact on the beliefs about teaching English as an international language (TEIL) of Vietnamese teachers of English? Specifically,

   1.1. What are their beliefs about TEIL?

   1.2. How does teacher education impact on these beliefs?

2. What is the professional experience in post-training periods of overseas- and localised-trained teachers in terms of their classroom teaching realities? Specifically,

   2.1. To what extent do they exercise their autonomy in teaching practice?
2.2. What roles do teacher education courses play in intensifying and/or mitigating their autonomy?

3. What is the professional experience in post-training periods of overseas- and localised-trained teachers in terms of their work satisfaction? Specifically,

3.1. How satisfied are they with their teaching jobs?

3.2. How does prior teacher training experience have an influence on their work satisfaction?

1.6. Significance of the study

“How could one teacher training course prepare participants for the work they would encounter throughout their career?” This question postulated by Freeman (2009) is likely one of the greatest concerns of both teacher learners and teacher educators of all teacher education programs. In focusing on the professional experience of TESOL teachers after they finished their training courses, the present study can contribute to shedding important light on the impact of TESOL teacher education on various aspects of teachers’ professional lives. In so doing, it will be able point out areas where TESOL programs have done well, as well as suggest appropriate improvements and alterations. Specifically, for the surveyed TESOL programs and their teacher educators, the research findings inform and help them gain insights into various meaningful aspects of their trainees’ professional lives after training. This information can be very useful for making adjustments to course delivery and content to better cater for the variety of learning needs of course participants.

Additionally, this research has the potential to provide comparative perspectives on the professional experience of Vietnamese TESOL teachers who took part in two types of training programs. This will help past TESOL teacher learners to critically reflect on their learning and teaching experience, as well as compare with that of other teachers. For future teachers who plan to undertake further training in one of these programs, the results from this study can be a reliable source of empirical reference for them in selecting an appropriate study program. The scope of the impact of the research can, consequently, extend beyond the Vietnamese setting and be applicable to other Expanding Circle countries that share comparable English teaching conditions and contexts.

Furthermore, findings from the study will benefit workplace administrators who are directly in charge of the returned TESOL teachers. They will better understand the thought processes of these teachers and receive useful suggestions to better appreciate the
expertise of this group of properly trained professionals. Also, by highlighting the
different TESOL programs available for teachers in an Expanding Circle country, this
research promises to enhance the globalised status of TESOL as a profession, and at the
same time, accentuate the crucial need for adequate consideration of context in
constructing and revising TESOL teacher training programs.

1.7. Definitions of terms

For the purpose of the present research, the following key terms are used.

Kachru’s (1985) *Three Concentric Circles of English* are used to refer to the
countries where the TESOL programs under research are based. According to Kachru,
these circles are formed based on the status of the English language and its functions in
different regions of the world. The *Inner Circle* refers to countries that form the traditional
historical and sociolinguistics bases of English, including Britain, Australia, New
Zealand, and North America. The *Outer Circle* are typically former colonies of the UK
and USA; the varieties of English used in these countries have achieved the status of
either an official language, or as an additional language used in education, administration,
and the legal system. Examples include India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Singapore,
Malaysia, and the Philippines. Finally, the *Expanding Circle* refers to countries where
English is increasingly becoming a dominant additional language in academia, such as
China, Russia, most of Europe, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, etc. To the present day, the
boundaries between these circles have become less clear due to the rapid development of
English across different parts of the world, especially in Expanding Circle countries. The
use of the term ‘Expanding Circle’ thus might need revision (Kirkpatrick, 2012). For this
particular study, Kachru’s divisions of English-using communities will be used mainly
for the sake of convenience, while acknowledging the current debate over the use of these
labels.

The *localised TESOL programs* which form part of this study are those which
originated in Inner-Circle countries and which offer further training at Master’s level in
Vietnam, either on their own or in association with a Vietnamese university. These
programs are *localised* in the sense that they involve collaboration with an Inner-Circle
institution, but are delivered in the local context of Vietnam and aim specifically to
enhance the professional knowledge and skills of Vietnamese teachers. Their curricula
(as will be analysed in detail in Chapter 4 of the thesis) are therefore often claimed to be
a blend between the principle and practice of the Inner-Circle program, but taking into
consideration the local context of Vietnam. Overseas programs, on the other hand, are entirely based in Inner-Circle countries. Vietnamese TESOL teachers, in this case, travel to and temporarily reside in these countries for study purposes.

The teacher participants in this research will be referred to as teacher learners (Kennedy, 1991), who are practicing teachers who teach students in the classroom and at the same time lifelong learners in formal as well as informal instructional settings, from short courses to full postgraduate degree programs. This term is used to distinguish these teachers from ‘student teachers’, who are pre-service teachers in their initial stage of teacher preparation.

1.8. Structure of the thesis

This dissertation is presented in eight chapters. Chapter 1 provides a general introduction to the study by discussing the global and local context within which the research is situated, identifying the research problem, and stating its aims and significance. Chapter 2 offers theoretical and empirical backgrounds to the research by detailing the components and trends of second language teacher education, as well as the changing realities in TESOL, thereby highlighting the three lenses through which the teachers’ professional experience are explored. This chapter also reviews empirical research on second language teacher education and its impact on teachers’ learning and teaching experience. Chapter 3 describes the research design, including research setting and participants, data collection methods and instruments, and data analysis methods. Chapter 4 gives an overview of the characteristics of the overseas and localised TESOL programs that participants of the present research attended, based on analyses of program and course documents. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 present the research findings on teachers’ beliefs about the teaching of English as an international language, their autonomy in teaching practice, and their work satisfaction, all with reference to their learning experience in teacher education programs. For each results chapter, a discussion section will be included based on analyses of the collected data. Finally, Chapter 8 concludes the study by highlighting its achievement, pointing out its limitations, and suggesting implications and directions for future research.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the following part of the thesis, the relevant literature that directly relates to the current research will be reviewed. First, I will describe the global and situational context in which the research is established and discuss theoretical issues that are foundational to the research, including the components and trends of second language teacher education, and changing realities in TESOL. Next, empirical studies on the practicality and effectiveness of TESOL courses across different contexts will be discussed, with an emphasis on
studies carried out within the Vietnamese context and/or with Vietnamese participants. This will highlight the need for conducting the present research.

2.1. Second language teacher education and its components and trends
The field of TESOL as it is known today began to take shape in the 1960s (Richards, 2008), with which came an increasing emphasis on second language teacher education (SLTE). According to Freeman (2009), due to the increasing popularity of the English language, by the 1990s, the term second language had gradually been expanded to refer to English as a foreign, second, or additional language. SLTE, therefore, predominantly refers to the training of teachers of English. A chronological investigation into the development of SLTE shows a range of components and trends at play.

2.1.1. The components of SLTE
Since the 1960s, SLTE has experienced significant changes, which is reflected in changes in its components. The following paragraphs will outline these components.

One of the most important components of SLTE is its knowledge base, which includes two main streams of knowledge: knowledge-about and knowledge-how (Richards, 2008). The former refers to content knowledge, for example, knowledge about language analysis, discourse analysis, and phonology. The latter refers to pedagogical content knowledge, or knowledge about teaching methodology that instructs teacher learners on how to conduct classroom teaching. In this component, knowledge about how learners learn a foreign language, or second language acquisition, is also a constituent. Throughout this period and until the 1980s, SLTE was seen mainly as a process of equipping students desiring to become English teachers with a selective set of professional knowledge and skills, and fostering the application of this input into student teachers’ teaching practice (Freeman, 2009). Presumably, this procedure could be better termed ‘teacher training’, whereby the ultimate goal of teacher preparation was to familiarise teacher learners with language-related and pedagogical knowledge and skills for application in classroom teaching (Richards & Nunan, 1990).

The 1990s, however, marked a shift in the scope of SLTE, when there was a movement from ‘teacher training’ to ‘teacher education’ (Richards & Nunan, 1990). This meant the scope of the field was expanded beyond initial preparation in knowledge and skills, and covered teacher learning from training periods to the development of the
teacher as a professional throughout her career (Head & Taylor, 1997, as cited in Freeman, 2009). This ideological shift continues and has been supported by many teacher educators (e.g., Borg, 2009a; Freeman, 2009; Kennedy, 1991). It is in this latter stage of SLTE, in which practicing teachers continue to seek professional development opportunities, that the present research is situated.

One of the most well-structured examples of the expansion of SLTE components is Freeman’s (2009) conceptualisation of the scope of SLTE, according to which SLTE is comprised of three dimensions, namely: 

**substance** (what to learn in SLTE and how to learn it); **engagement** (which learning is implicit and explicit in particular teaching activities, and how this adds to professional learning over time); and **influence** (how outcomes of SLTE programs are judged, or the efficacy of SLTE). The first dimension, substance, refers to the language and pedagogical content knowledge that has traditionally made up a crucial part of many SLTE programs. The other two dimensions are more recent developments that reveal current trends in the field, since they demonstrate an effort to incorporate into SLTE contextual issues that constitute the realities of teaching English as a second/foreign language. It should be noted that it is the third dimension of influence that the present study focuses on, while also taking into consideration TESOL teachers’ engagement with what they learn in teacher education, or the substance of SLTE.

### 2.1.2. Current trends in SLTE

As noted above, the conceptual shift in SLTE in the 1990s has brought about emerging trends that significantly influence the way SLTE is viewed. What follows are discussions of the key trends and how they impact on the direction of the current study.

#### 2.1.2.1. The interrelation between theory and practice, and the role of praxis

Gone is the day when SLTE’s main concern is to provide teacher learners with a predetermined set of knowledge and skills and expect them to translate all that input into their teaching practice. In reality, there is a complex interrelation between teachers’ professional learning and how they apply what they have learnt (see Burns & Richards, 2009; Freeman, 1996; K. Johnson, 2009). In the field of education, this ideology is actualised under the concept of *praxis*.

“Teachers cannot be puppets of theorists” (Dogancay-Aktuna & Hardman, 2012, p. 115); therefore, the implementation of theories into practice has to be a creative process whereby the teacher is in total charge of her own actions. Teacher education, accordingly,
is not simply a transmission of a set of knowledge necessary for teaching. The application of teaching knowledge and skills, or praxis, is the “continuous integration of thought, desire, and action” (Simon, 1992, p. 124), in which ‘thought’ is interpreted as understandings, ‘action’ as teaching performance, and ‘desire’ as motivation of various teacher and learner identities. This line of thinking was developed from Freire’s (1970) conceptualisation of praxis, which suggests that praxis includes both action and reflection. From Freire’s viewpoint, knowledge is in a process of constant change and development; one can never claim she has learnt all there is to know about a subject matter. Praxis, therefore, starts with an abstract idea (theory) or an experience, and involves reflection on that idea or experience and then translates it into purposeful action. Given this, praxis can be said to possess the characteristics of being “reflective, active, creative, contextual, purposeful, and socially constructed” (Dogancay-Aktuna & Hardman, 2012, p. 116).

This view resonates with O’Hanlon’s (1993) proposal of linking the dichotomy between theory and practice with the distinction between what he termed ‘professional theories’ and ‘personal theories’. Professional theories, according to O’Hanlon, are those developed by experts in the field and often circulated by higher learning centers; they can also be called ‘theorists’ theory’. Personal theories, conversely, are those generated by teachers through the process of applying professional theories into actual teaching practice, and can be called ‘teachers’ theory’. This formulated thinking emphasises the role of teacher’s autonomy and creativity in transferring and transforming theoretical knowledge and internalizing it, or as Kumaravadivelu (2001) puts it, “theoris[ing] from their practice and practic[ing] what they theorise” (p. 541).

From these perspectives, it can be summarised that the emphasis on the relationship between theory and practice is one important trend that has created new trajectories of development for how present-day SLTE is conceptualised. A clear demonstration of this is the formulation of praxis as “not the application of theory in the classroom, but, a way of seeing classroom action as both theorised and generative of theory” (Dogancay-Aktuna & Hardman, 2012, p. 105). Given this background, the present study will investigate the applicability of teachers’ gained knowledge and skills to not only point out the well-known gap between theory and practice in SLTE (Freeman, 2009, 2016), but also explore the extent to which teachers who had undergone training can generate their theory from practice and become well-informed, autonomous teaching practitioners. This focus on the context of teaching and giving independence to the teacher
points SLTE researchers toward another important factor in the reality of teaching practice, which is teacher autonomy.

2.1.2.2. Teacher autonomy
Teacher autonomy has in recent years gained considerable attention in the field of language teaching (Benson, 2006). According to McGrath (2000), teacher autonomy involves ideas of professional freedom and self-directed professional development; and can be understood in part as the recognition of one’s own professional freedom in the implementation of curriculum guidelines. As such, this concept is closely related to classroom contexts, specifically how much independence and control the language teacher has concerning key aspects of classroom matters, such as lesson planning, student assessment, and teachers’ decision making. Also, teacher autonomy can be demonstrated through the extent to which teachers are able to deal with constraints in the teaching environment, as well as their willingness to engage in processes involving institutional change beyond the classroom walls (Mackenzie, 2002; Pearson & Hall, 1993; R. Smith & Erdogan, 2008). As one of the main parts of the present investigation concerns the instructional practice of TESOL teachers, teacher autonomy will be utilised as a lens through which the teacher experience will be uncovered. In line with this emphasis on the impact of teachers’ working environment on teacher autonomy, it is worthwhile to discuss another important emerging trend in SLTE, in which societal discourses are given the central role.

2.1.2.3. The sociocultural approach to SLTE
It can be inferred from the conceptualisation of praxis that the activity of teaching and of teachers learning to teach cannot be detached from its social context. This is also the point of departure of the sociocultural approach to SLTE. A sociocultural stance in SLTE is rooted in sociocultural theory, which was originally developed by Vygotsky (1978) and takes as its core the conception that human cognition is formed through social interaction. The process of learning is thus not the direct application of knowledge and skills from the outside in, but the gradual movement from external, interactional activities to internal control by individual learners, the result of which is the transformation of both the learner self and the activity. In this regard, the sociocultural perspective transforms how teacher learning, language, and language teaching is understood. Specifically, K. Johnson (2009) points out two noteworthy points of view that the sociocultural perspective brings to teacher education: 1) the view of teachers as learners of teaching, or how teacher learning
takes root in and is created by teachers working in their own contexts; and 2) the stress on broader social structures and “how an individual teacher’s activities shape and are shaped by the social, cultural, and historical macro-structures that constitute his/her professional world” (p.5). Moreover, Johnson takes a step further and calls for the need for both the content and activities of SLTE to consider the social, political, economic, and cultural histories that are inherent in the contexts where L2 teachers live, learn, and work. This consideration of the sociocultural context of teaching leads to the need to study an important social aspect of a teacher’s professional life, that is their work satisfaction.

2.1.2.4. Teacher work satisfaction
Teacher work satisfaction, according to Pennington (1991), is teachers’ emotional reaction, or their attitudes, to the fit between the expectations, values, and desires they have for the teaching profession, and the reality of their work situation. This fit or discrepancy dictates whether or not a teacher is satisfied or dissatisfied with his/her job. Many factors have been postulated to constitute work satisfaction. Herzberg (1976), speaking from the perspective of work satisfaction in general, suggests that these factors include motivational factors that are intrinsic to the work itself such as achievements, recognition, and responsibility, and hygiene factors such as workplace conditions, salary, or supervision, which are external to the work of a job. Along the same lines, Dinham and Scott (1998) provide a description of work satisfaction for teachers specifically, consisting of three domains: intrinsic rewards of teaching, factors extrinsic to the school, and school-related factors. Intrinsic rewards are demonstrated in teachers’ positive emotions generated from their actual teaching and working with students, and their contentment in seeing students’ development and achievements. Factors extrinsic to the school comprise educational change, external school evaluation, and the general status of the teaching profession. School-based factors include, but are not limited to, relationship with colleagues, supervisors, and students, the school leadership, and time pressure (teachers’ assigned workload and whether they have time for rest and recovery). In an effort to study the impact of working conditions on teachers’ perception of their professional lives, in the present research, the participants’ work satisfaction will be examined through the influence of intrinsic rewards of teaching and school-based factors.
2.1.2.5. The role of teacher cognition/teacher beliefs

Along with emerging emphases on the level of praxis, teacher autonomy in teaching practice, and the role of context in SLTE, teacher cognition has also attracted the interest of second language researchers (Borg, 2006, 2009a; Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015). According to Borg (2006), teacher cognition is a broad term that comprises different aspects of teachers’ mental lives, including their thoughts, knowledge, and beliefs. These elements are believed to influence the way language teachers conduct their teaching practice (Farrell, 1999; Gatbonton, 1999; K. Johnson, 1992). At the same time, certain features have been reported to impact on the cognition of pre-service as well as in-service language teachers; the teacher education program is one of them, along with prior language learning experience and the practicum (Borg, 2006). This very much highlights the role of SLTE in teacher cognition development.

The relationship between teacher cognition and practice, however, is not linear. Teachers’ actions are not always a reflection of their knowledge and beliefs. In fact, these factors, according to K. Johnson and Golombek (2011), inform each other. This is where the ‘desire’ (motivation) part may enter the picture, if one looks at this issue from the perspective of praxis. That is, teacher thoughts are very often mediated by their desire to teach in a particular way in certain situations, before they are actualised into practice. Additionally, it is important to take into account various sociocultural contexts that may impact on teacher cognition and practice. In other words, the institutional, instructional, and physical settings of the context in which teachers work may constrain what they can do, and thus the teaching that comes out of such contexts might not entirely be what they ‘desire’ (Borg, 2009b). For this particular study, the cognition of TESOL teachers will be examined through their teaching beliefs, particularly in the context of English being an international language.

2.1.2.6. Teachers’ reflective practice

Teachers’ reflective practice, which refers to teachers’ abilities to be aware, critical, and reflective about their teaching, has in recent years attracted growing interests among TESOL professionals (Farrell, 2007, 2016). Teacher reflection generally involves two main features: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Schon, 1983, 1987). The former refers to the process of teachers relying on previously learnt knowledge and experiences to make appropriate pedagogical decisions while teaching, while the latter is concerned with how teachers make sense of their classroom teaching and learn to generate
their own theories after teaching. While much of the literature on reflective practice has focused on what teachers do when delivering classroom instruction and what they think about their teaching practices, it has also been generally agreed that reflection is an important part of SLTE. First, reflection is crucial for professional learning (Burton, 2009; Wallace, 1991), and second, being reflective encourages teacher learners to take charge of their own learning and consolidate and build up their pedagogical knowledge (Farrell, 2013, 2015). The concept of reflective practice is useful for the present study as TESOL teachers of this research were given the opportunity to think about and reflect on their experiences during teacher training.

To summarise, the investigation into the components and emerging trends of SLTE of the present day has brought to the forefront core issues that constitute the theoretical background of the current research, which aims to explore the professional experience of Vietnamese TESOL teachers with direct and central reference to the SLTE programs they attended. In addition to these crucial features of SLTE, another issue that reveals itself is the fact that SLTE should always be considered in the larger context of TESOL as a professional field, together with all its changing realities.

2.2. The changing realities in TESOL

TESOL is a dynamic profession and is involved in what Richards (2009) calls ‘an ongoing reinvention’ (p. 15), whereby changing realities become a fundamental feature. Among these, the emergent spread of English as an international language, the globalisation trend in TESOL, and the increasing influence of critical pedagogy as a paradigm shift in methodological foci, are the highlights. The following section will describe these realities and their effects on SLTE.

2.2.1. English as an international language (EIL) and the native/nonnative dichotomy

In her book entitled “The phonology of English as an international language”, Jenkins (2000) pointed out changing patterns in the use of English worldwide. Indeed, nowadays English has become the most popular medium of communication among people of different nationalities and linguistic backgrounds (Crystal, 1997; Holliday, 2005; Kirkpatrick, 2002, 2007, 2010, 2011, 2014; McKay, 2002; Seidlhofer, 2011). As a result, there have emerged many varieties of English, or so-called World Englishes, that are developed by people who are not native speakers of the language but use it regularly in
their everyday lives. English, as Widdowson (1998) states, has been developing outside any control of native speakers in England, the United States, or anywhere else. Along this line, the notion of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) is also proposed, which “emphasises the role of English in communication between speakers from different L1s” (Jenkins, 2000, p. 11). All of this, together with the increasingly large number of speakers of English as a second language, very much highlights the predominance of non-native uses of English over the use of English as a mother tongue, and accentuates the increasing trend of English being considered an international language that belongs to everyone who uses it, not just native English speakers.

Nevertheless, the native/non-native dichotomy is still a major concern in the practice of English teaching and learning. The origin of this binary can be traced back to Chomsky’s (1965) definition of a native speaker of a language, which is someone who was born to the language and becomes an “ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly” (Chomsky, 1965, p. 3). From this conceptualisation, it can be inferred that a non-native speaker is the opposite image of a native speaker, and it is thus natural that the two terms often go together, one reflecting the other. In the case of English, however, the concept of a native and non-native speaker is much less clear-cut and is in fact, very much a myth (Jenkins, 2000; Paikeday, 1985; Phillipson, 2002). English is now becoming a global language spoken by people who might not be born to the language and belong to a different speech community but who know it just as well.

Even though the native/nonnative dichotomy has been challenged by some applied linguists as being “offensive”, “hierarchical”, and “discriminatory” (Phillipson, 1992) and is considered to “perpetuate the idea that monolingualism is the norm when, in fact, precisely the opposite should be true” (Jenkins, 2000, p. 9), it is still prevalent in the English teaching and learning world. Specifically in the case of English, the preference toward native-speakerness is reflected in a phenomenon that Holliday (2006) terms native-speakerism. It is a prevalent ideology demonstrated in the belief that native-speakers “represent a ‘Western culture’ from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology” (ibid, p. 385). This definition briefly summarises the realities of English teaching and learning in different regions in the world where English is not the mother tongue. Particularly, in these contexts native-speakerness holds prestige in terms of the varieties to be taught and learnt (Ahn, 2014; Ton & Pham, 2010); native-speaker proficiency is often preferred (Park, 2012); native
English teachers might be better valued than non-native teachers only based on their linguistic advantage (Llurda, 2005); cultures of traditional English speaking countries are more frequently represented and taught than cultures of other parts of the world (Kirkpatrick, 2002; Song, 2011; Wu, 2010); Anglocentric teaching methods are often readily adopted (Kumaravadivelu, 2012).

What seems like a paradox is that within the ELT profession, it is mostly ‘native-speaker’ linguists that have been calling for the reconceptualisation of the native speaker notion (Canagarajah, 1999). ‘Non-native speakers’, meanwhile, appear to succumb to the discrimination, and “are intimidated by the native speaker norm and understandably try to approximate this norm” (Kramsch, 1993, p. 9). In an effort to overturn this situation, TESOL scholars have started to turn to SLTE as a key force to transform teacher thinking on critical issues in the field, including the native/non-native division. This has therefore brought about a paradigm shift in SLTE. Dogancay-Aktuna and Hardman (2012), for example, develop a situated meta-praxis model of EIL teacher education that revolves around “the interaction between place, proficiency, praxis, and a set of understandings about language, culture, identity and teaching” (p. 104) that are concurrent with teaching EIL (see Figure 1). In this model, place refers to the context where teacher learners come from and will go back to teach after a training program, and proficiency is the English language level required of both teachers and learners. The model also places emphasis on the role of theory (understandings of extended components and trends of TESOL) and praxis (action) in SLTE.

![Figure 2.1. Situated meta-praxis model of EIL teacher education (Dogancay-Aktuna & Hardman, 2012)](image)

In a similar vein, Kirkpatrick (2007) proposes a list of requirements for TESOL teachers intending to teach in Outer and Expanding Circle countries. These include teachers being multilingual and multicultural; having a good understanding of the
educational, social, and cultural contexts of their teaching; providing an appropriate model for their students; understanding and appreciating different English varieties; understanding the development of English in specific contexts and its worldwide spread; understanding the role of English in the local community; and being able to evaluate students’ needs and teaching toward their needs. These requirements take into consideration the changing status of English and emphasise the need of raising teacher learners’ awareness of current issues in teaching EIL. Consequently, they can act as important bases for educating EIL teachers.

2.2.2. Globalisation in TESOL

Another prevailing social trend that has made obvious impacts on various aspects of the field of TESOL is globalisation, a term that has recently been used in a large number of TESOL documents. The fundamental concept behind this phenomenon is that there is an intense relationship between local events and global happenings (Giddens, 1990, as cited in Block, 2008). The effects of this, not surprisingly, are changes in the world landscape, which include ‘shrinking space’, ‘shrinking time’, and ‘disappearing borders’ (United Nations Development Program (UNDP), 1999, as cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2006). This means that people’s lives are constantly affected by events that happen miles away from them; modern technology changes the way people act and behave; and the breakdown of national borders has an impact across different social areas.

In the field of TESOL, the power of globalisation is felt most clearly in the fact that nowadays English is selected as the language of communication in most international contexts, regardless of where communicators are from (Block, 2008; Kirkpatrick, 2012). English has become so popular that its spread poses a threat to the well-being of certain other languages, both national and local (Kirkpatrick, 2007, 2010, 2012; Phillipson, 1992; Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). The negative consequence that comes with this is the apprehensive feeling caused by what Kumaravadivelu (2006) calls “the dangerous liaison between globalization, empire, and English demand” (p. 17). Kumaravadivelu’s concern is since language and empire often accompany each other, the presence of globalisation may accelerate various forms of social colonisation. In the case of English, this is even more likely, as throughout history English has often served the various purposes of its empires. The spread of English, thus, has long been argued to “disseminate Western thoughts and ideas, by denigrating local knowledge” (p. 12).
In an attempt to make a case against this liaison, Kumaravadivelu (2006) suggests relocating TESOL by means of philosophical and pedagogic investment. In terms of pedagogic investment, teacher education is one of the three main areas involved, along with instructional materials and teaching methods. Regarding teaching methods, Kumaravadivelu is at the forefront in proposing a shift from the centralised concept of method to the localised concept of postmethod. His proposition of postmethod pedagogy is based on three main parameters, namely particularity, practicality, and possibility (Kumaravadivelu, 2002). A pedagogy of particularity aims to foster context-specific, meaningful teaching which takes into account local linguistic, sociocultural, and political particularities. A pedagogy of practicality seeks to reconceptualise the relationship between theory and practice, and emphasises the role of teacher-generated theories. A pedagogy of possibility aims to involve the socio-political consciousness that participants bring to the classroom, and draw on their potential to create identity and social transformation. This pedagogical shift, in its turn, leads to a renewed role for SLTE. This view of Kumaravadivelu is also proposed by other teacher educators (Freeman & Richards, 1996; Richards, 2008; Richards & Nunan, 1990). They suggest a change from the transmission model of SLTE to a transformative model, whereby second language teachers can exercise their autonomy and construct their own theory from practice.

Apart from this significant ideological shift, globalisation has made an impact on the physical landscape of TESOL teacher education, partly demonstrated in the mobility of teachers and teacher training programs. One of the most obvious demonstrations of this is the advent of the social phenomenon called ‘cross-border higher education’ in TESOL, in which a large number of TESOL teachers from Outer and Expanding Circle countries have been traveling to countries in the Inner-Circle for further studies. Obtaining a higher degree in one of the Anglophone countries has become one an important professional development goal for many English teachers from the other two circles (see Chowdhury & Phan, 2014; Liyanage & Barlett, 2008; Park, 2012; Pavlenko, 2003). This has even come to a point where TESOL programs, most of them offered in Inner-Circle countries, have become commercialised (Chowdhury & Phan, 2014). This stems from the fact that nowadays many TESOL institutions have commodified their courses and are competing to sell these as products to potential students/customers.

The rise of international education has also created an impetus for Inner-Circle institutions to expand their influences and offer offshore TESOL courses in Outer and Expanding Circle countries (see Phan, 2017). “Overcom[ing] physical boundaries” and
contributing to the development of the university through “international partnerships” are the specific reasons given by institutions in the English-speaking West (University of Canberra, n.d.) for providing their TESOL programs offshore, in most cases in conjunction with an institution in the host country (Dobinson & Mercieca, 2012; Stracke, 2012).

This globalisation trend, coupled with the rise of English as an international language, undoubtedly adds to the development of TESOL. At the same time, these realities have also impacted on the field in ways that are not always preferable, for example, the predominance of English and the threat it poses to other, or the perpetual dichotomy between native and non-native teachers of English. Due to these unbalanced relations of power, the teaching of English nowadays reaches far beyond the walls of the classroom and involves various critical issues, which leads toward another emerging reality termed critical language teacher education.

2.2.3. Critical language teacher education

According to Pennycook (2001), as one of the important concerns of applied linguistics, language teaching has also become a crucial domain of critical applied linguistics, an approach which focuses on “relating aspects of applied linguistics to broader social, cultural, and political domains” (p. 5). This approach is based on the concept of critical theory, which embraces the ideology that theory plays an important role in addressing social inequality (Poster, 1989). Adopting a critical perspective, therefore, means to “locate and confront issues of power, privilege, and hegemony” (Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, & Hui, 2005, p. 368).

More specifically, in terms of ELT, Luke (2004) argues that there are even more compelling reasons for TESOL educators to engage with the critical, one of which is that “TESOL is a pedagogical site and institution for educating the racial and linguistic Other” (Luke, 2004, p. 25). This means the dynamics of power within the TESOL classroom in many countries entail such a wide range of social relations that, if not taken critically, they might run the risk of reproducing larger social and economic relations that widen the gap between the more privileged and the less privileged. Therefore, by being critical, or as Luke (2004) suggests, by making an effort to “engage in disruptive, skeptical, and other” social and discourse relations than those that are currently dominant (p. 24), one is involved in the process of problematising the givens, and thus comes to have a better understanding of the world as well as of oneself in relation to other social,
cultural, and political elements that characterise one’s social surroundings.

This belief has given even more important responsibilities to English language teachers, as they are often the first official contacts with the language that learners have. Also, in contexts where English is used as a foreign language, the teacher, in most cases, acts as a representative of the cultural and social features associated with the language (Hawkins & Norton, 2009). Language teachers, therefore, must be critical in their teaching to be able to recognise ideological powers that are present in their classrooms, and to empower their learners to become moral agents of society (Richards, 2008). Training critical language teachers, presumably, should be on the agendas of SLTE programs. In their book chapter on critical language teacher education, Hawkins and Norton (2009) also emphasise the role of SLTE in engaging TESOL teachers in critical language teaching, and discuss accounts of critical language teacher education practices. These include raising teacher learners’ critical awareness of the construction of power relations in society, and the extent to which social, political, and cultural practices can cause educational inequality; encouraging teacher learners to critically self-reflect on their own identities and positioning; and creating equitable pedagogical relations between teacher educators and teacher learners. Given the empirical basis on which these accounts are drawn, they are likely to provide a useful framework for practicing critical language teacher education.

The review of current trends and components of SLTE, as well as the changing realities in TESOL, displays the general landscape of SLTE in the contemporary globalised world, in addition to bringing to the foreground many key points regarding current practice of SLTE. First and foremost is the changing knowledge base of SLTE, which does not only include acquisition of linguistic and pedagogical knowledge and skills, but also involves praxis, or the combination of thoughts (knowledge) and desire (motivation) with action (practice). SLTE, hence, incorporates both introducing theories to teachers and encouraging them to formulate their own theories from practice. Second, SLTE could be seen as a sociocultural activity that shapes and is shaped by particular social, cultural, and political contexts. Third, participating in a teacher education program can impact on teacher autonomy, and/or teacher cognition (knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs), although this is not always translated into teaching practice due to social constraints. Fourth, the influence of increasing globalisation and the spread of EIL provides motivation for the development of a model of SLTE that takes into consideration principles of the role of teacher beliefs, autonomy in teaching practice, and work
satisfaction. The next section will introduce the characteristics of contemporary SLTE in Vietnam, the physical site of the present study, in relation to these globalised trends.

2.3. The context of second language teacher education in Vietnam

2.3.1. Overview of SLTE in Vietnam

Since the national economic reform known as “Doi moi” in 1986 when the country started to open its policy to attract foreign investments, English has taken over the place of Russian and become the predominant foreign language taught in Vietnam across all educational levels, from primary and secondary schools to universities (Hoang, 2010; T. N. Nguyen, 2012; Nunan, 2003; Sullivan, 1996; Wrights, 2002). Additionally, a large number of English language centres have also been established in major cities in the country in order to meet the increasing demand of English learners. The main reason for this increasing popularity of English lies in the fact that in the new economic era, a certain level of English competence brings great advantages to Vietnamese working in many sections of the country’s economy, from business, tourism, to education. A good command of English is thus deemed important for young people seeking good job opportunities.

This growing demand for English learning in Vietnam has led to increased pressure on the training of English teachers, since the larger the number of learners, the tougher it is to maintain and strengthen the quality of teacher education. In the Vietnamese education system, English language teachers are officially trained in teacher’s colleges that offer three- to four-year training programs, in which student teachers take various courses that aim to enhance their English language skills and equip them with foundational English teaching methodology. Graduates are then qualified to teach English at primary and secondary levels. Those who teach at university level are required to pursue a Master’s degree in ELT. There are currently several institutions nationwide that offer TESOL programs at Bachelor’s and Master’s level, including the University of Hanoi; University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University; College of Foreign Languages, Da Nang University; College of Foreign Languages, Hue University; Ho Chi Minh City University of Education; and University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ho Chi Minh City National University.

Besides domestic training, the country’s open-door policy has brought about greater international cooperation in education, including the field of TESOL. From 1985, Australia resumed its English training scheme for Vietnam under the United Nations
Development Program (UNDP) and then in 1992 through a bilateral aid program between Australia and Vietnam (AusAID), Vietnamese teachers of English were sent to Australia to study for a Master’s degree or graduate diploma in TESOL/Education. Around 40 English teachers from Vietnam embark on their study journeys to Australia each year. The same goes for the New Zealand government, who provide higher education opportunities to Vietnamese professionals in different disciplines, including TESOL, through a scholarship scheme called NZAID. The NZAID offers about 30 postgraduate scholarships to Vietnamese professionals annually, in which there are three to five for TESOL teachers. Also started in 1992, the Fulbright Student Program, administered by the US Congress, has contributed to providing professional development opportunities to Vietnamese teachers of English by offering scholarships to outstanding professionals for Master’s degrees programs at US universities. Around four to five scholarships of this kind are offered yearly.

At the same time, Vietnamese teachers of English have also sought professional development chances in training programs offered by Inner-Circle institutions in Vietnam (Dobinson & Mercieca, 2012; Stracke, 2012), due to geographical proximity, and the promises made by these institutions, that their offshore students will experience the same quality education as that given onshore. A few of such programs are the Graduate Diploma in TESOL and Master of TESOL offered by Victoria University, Melbourne in conjunction with Hanoi University and Ho Chi Minh City Open University; the MA TESOL program offered by the University of Canberra, based at the University of Education in Ho Chi Minh City; and the joint Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics program between Curtin University, Perth, and SEAMEO (the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation) Regional Training Center, Ho Chi Minh City.

2.3.2. Current issues in English language education in Vietnam
The status of English teacher training in Vietnam is strongly connected with contemporary issues concerning English language education. Currently, the most discussed issue relating to English in Vietnam is the new government policies for the teaching and learning of English. Deeply concerned by the reported low English proficiency levels of its citizens, the Vietnamese government decided in 2008 to invest in an ambitious project named the National Foreign Language 2020 Project (NFL2020) to renovate the teaching and learning of foreign languages within the national education
system. With an estimated total cost of approximately 500 million US dollars, the ultimate goal of the project is to

- impact human resource development and professional skills through an emphasis on foreign language proficiency so that by the year 2020 most Vietnamese youth who graduate from vocational schools, colleges and universities gain the capacity to use a foreign language independently... to be more confident in communication, further their chance to study and work in an integrated and multicultural environment with a variety of languages... serving the cause of industrialization and modernization for the country. (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2008, p. 1)

According to Dudzik and T. N. Q. Nguyen (2015), the NFL2020 project has achieved certain goals since its inception, including:

1. Successfully creating an English competency framework based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), ensuring that Vietnamese teachers and learners of English are assessed against international standards;
2. Building the English Teacher Competencies Framework, which consists of five domains of knowledge and skills that would enable Vietnamese teachers of English to capitalize on their students’ soft skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, presentation and discussion skills, etc.;
3. Creating a network of flagship regional foreign language centers to provide professional development programs to the country’s approximately 80,000 teachers of English in public schools.

Despite these outcomes, the NFL2020 project is for the most part seen as ambitious, and its implementation has met with many criticisms. First, there is concern over the reliability of the CEFR-based tests, since different levels of these tests have been adopted and redesigned non-unanimously across the flagship regional foreign language centers, creating doubts as to whether teachers and learners are fairly assessed (Dudzik & T. N. Q. Nguyen, 2015). Furthermore, at the institutional and individual teacher’s level, the CEFR enactment is still, to a large extent, carried out superficially, as revealed in V. H. Nguyen and Hamid’s (2015) study on the institutional policy and teaching practice at one of the five regional language centers after the introduction of the CEFR. This research reported that, to most of the teachers at this institution, the framework meant testing scores only; very few had a clear conceptual idea of what the CEFR really is in terms of teaching and learning goals and practice. This is a consequence of a top-down approach to educational policy, whereby adopted policies are borrowed from other contexts without sufficient consideration to various factors at the ‘bottom’ level that may hinder their implementation (see H. T. Nguyen, Walkinshaw, & Pham, 2017). Further challenges to
meeting the project goals by the year 2020 include insufficient financial resources and facilities, lack of public awareness of the ambitious project goals, and inadequate professional and managerial capacity (Phan, as cited in Dudzik & T. N. Q. Nguyen, 2015). Although it remains to be seen to what extent the NFL2020 project will yield the intended goals within the given time frame, it is unequivocally a major reform effort by the Vietnamese government to improve the foreign language competence of its citizens, with a focus on English. The implementation of the project has also prompted both education policy makers and the Vietnamese in general to face and seek solutions to a multitude of long-standing problems related to English language teaching in the country, such as learners’ low English proficiency, lack of teaching and learning sources, and shortage of adequately trained English teachers, especially at elementary levels (see Hoang, 2010; Mai, 2014; T. M. H. Nguyen, 2011).

Given the importance attached to English education in Vietnam and the current divergence in destinations for further studies of Vietnamese teacher of English, the Vietnamese context promises to be a fertile ground for research into the impact of TESOL teacher education programs on their teacher learners.

2.4. Review of empirical research on the impact of SLTE programs

Twenty years ago, in a book he co-edited with Jack Richards on teacher learning in SLTE, Donald Freeman (1996) quoted a section from an article written by the US National Council of Teacher Education Research (NCTRE):

Despite the plethora of suggestions, teacher education is still an “unstudied problem”. We know relatively little about what goes on in different teacher education programs and how teachers are affected. (1988, p. 27)

Between then and the present time, the research base of SLTE has experienced significant developments. Much more light, therefore, has been shed on teacher training realities in teacher education programs. What is remarkable is this body of research has been largely conducted with SLTE programs in Inner-Circle countries from the perspectives of EFL teachers from Outer and Expanding Circle countries. A review of the literature on various aspects of these SLTE programs shows three areas of teachers’ professional experiences that teacher education has exerted significant impact on, including teacher learning and their teaching beliefs, their teaching practice, and their overall professional development.
2.4.1. The impact of SLTE on teacher learning and their teaching beliefs

Attendance in SLTE programs has been shown to bring about positive changes in language teachers’ professional knowledge. McKnight and Turner (1995) surveyed a small population of non-native English teachers studying for a Master’s degree in TESOL at an Australian institution; one of their research aims was to investigate what these student teachers had learnt from the MA courses. The results showed that most participants believed they were able to learn current knowledge about language teaching methodology and ESL/EFL teaching resources, as well as have a better knowledge of the Australian Teachers of English as a Second Language program organization and related, available technology.

In another study that recruited Vietnamese teachers of English who graduated from Master’s programs in TESOL at Australian universities as main participants, Phan (2008) and Pham (2006, n.d.) both found, among other research findings, that the various courses in linguistics and language pedagogy that the teacher participants took part in significantly enhanced their teaching knowledge and skills. One participant even claimed that she had developed more substantial understanding about language teaching than she had expected.

Taking a more critical stance, Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) targeted their research toward examining if the discourse of teacher education programs constitutes a colonial cultural form that disempowers its students; and if so, what can be done to overcome this inequity. Seventeen non-native graduate and doctoral students participated in a seminar which focused its discussions on critical praxis. The seminar was part of an ESOL teacher preparation program in a North American university. The discussion questions centred around the native/non-native dichotomy with a view to addressing this critically. The results showed that the participants appeared to engage with the dichotomy, but through the course of the seminar, in which critical input was made in the form of critical reading and self-reflection, they showed increased awareness of themselves and other professionals, developed a clearer sense of identity as non-native speakers, and shared willingness to combat the native-nonnative dichotomy. This, according to these researchers, exemplifies “a pedagogy of empowerment” (p. 419), whereby teacher education courses can empower teacher-earners to engage with the critical and diversify their thoughts and thus action.
Also investigating the amount of knowledge gain as a result of participation in SLTE programs, Chowdhury and Phan (2014) surveyed teachers after they had returned to teach in their own contexts from their TESOL program in an Australian university. In a series of follow-up interviews with the researchers, one of the participants (a Japanese EFL teacher) noted confidently the benefits the TESOL programs had brought to her professional development. Thirteen months back into her teaching, she came to see herself as “a mature professional who had studied abroad and returned to work with new experiences and knowledge” (p. 206). The participant was happy with what she had learnt in Australia and felt that she was able to successfully apply her newly-acquired knowledge.

In terms of the impact of teacher education programs on teacher beliefs, studies have been conducted to explore second language teachers’ thinking about various aspects of teaching such as grammar instruction (Borg, 2006), implementation of innovative teaching techniques and activities (Borg, 2011; Freeman, 1993), critical issues concerned with teaching English (e.g., the status of native and non-native speaker teacher) (Chowdhury & Phan, 2014; Pavlenko, 2003; Phan, 2008); and general teaching practice (Phipps & Borg, 2007; Urmston & Pennington, 2008). These existing studies contribute to the literature in several meaningful ways: some indicated little change in teacher beliefs before and after training, while others showed that teacher education played a role in strengthening language teachers’ existing beliefs or modifying them. None of them, however, focused specifically on teacher beliefs about aspects of teaching English as an international language (TEIL), an important issue in ELT that deserves more substantial attention (see section 2.2.1). In addition, most of the studies reviewed above were conducted while the teacher learners were in the training programs, except for Chowdhury and Phan’s (2014). This makes it possible to elicit immediate feedback and comments from the participants while their ideas of the programs were still fresh. As a result, the profile of their learning created from these accounts, though vivid, was more imaginative than realistic. In this respect, Chowdhury and Phan’s (2014) research addresses this issue and provides a more practical view of the impacts of teacher education programs on teacher learning as seen through practice, through follow-up email interviews with the participants. Not much research of this kind, however, has been conducted. More in-depth investigation is thus needed to shed light on teacher learning and beliefs about TEIL after training through a wider range of research instruments.
2.4.2. The impact of SLTE on teaching practice: Application of learnt knowledge and the discrepancy between theory and practice

Previous studies with teacher-learners from Outer and Expanding Circle countries undergoing TESOL training in Inner-Circle institutions have reported two types of impact that overseas training had on these teachers’ teaching practice. On one hand, they were found to successfully apply certain knowledge and techniques acquired from training to their everyday classroom teaching. Macalister (2016) observed lessons of pre-service Malaysian teachers of English who previously had two years of training in New Zealand, and found that some techniques associated with the New Zealand training (e.g., running dictation) were applied to make the classroom more learner-centered. Similarly, Chinese in-service teachers returning from a three-month professional development course in the UK in Li and Edwards (2013, 2014) were found to implement a more constructivist approach to English teaching as a result of the UK-based training. There was also evidence of learnt instructional techniques and strategies adopted and adapted by the teachers (e.g., gapped dictation and project work).

On the other hand, studies conducted with teacher learners from Outer and Expanding Circle countries attending TESOL programs in an Inner-Circle institution have reported that these teachers experienced various levels of difficulty in applying what they learned to their teaching practice. For instance, Yeh (2011) focused on the challenges and dilemmas that a group of non-English-speaking background EFL teachers in a US-based TESOL program faced when transferring theories and practices cross-culturally, and revealed a contrasting picture of two communities of practice: one was at the US institution and the other was the context that each of the participants would return to after finishing their degrees. The findings showed that the teachers experienced a range of contradictions between their native contexts and the teaching theories generated from Anglophone-oriented philosophy. During group discussions, they suggested possible measures that overseas TESOL teacher training programs could take to bridge the gap between theories and practice to better engage their teacher learners, such as establishing interactive groups as a venue for them to promote “critical reflections and ongoing inquiry” (p. 103).

In a similar vein, McKnight and Turner (1995) and Liyanage anad Barlett (2008) explored the challenges that teacher participants of two TESOL programs in Australia anticipated that they would face upon returning to teach in their home countries. Arising from the findings were issues about developing flexibility in teaching approaches, coping
with large class sizes, and adapting learnt skills to the local context. Concerns were also mentioned about obtaining current sources of information, textbooks, and technology and financial resources in the home countries.

At the level of textual analysis, Govardhan et al. (1999), Liu (1998), and Kamhi-Stein (2000) pointed out numerous mismatches between theory and practice in the content of SLTE programs. Govardhan et al. analysed a directory of 350 different Master’s programs in TESOL in the US and came to a conclusion that US-based MA TESOL programs did not necessarily reflect the needs of teacher learners who planned to teach abroad, and that some courses were only peripherally related to TESOL. Liu made an even stronger case and claimed that “strong ethnocentrism exists in TESOL teacher education in English-speaking countries” (p. 3). The needs of international TESOL teacher learners, therefore, were not adequately catered for in these programs. Holding the same view, Kamhi-Stein suggested activities for reforming the content of a US-based TESOL program, including implementing focused reading activities to explore teacher beliefs, and encouraging teacher learners to participate in web-based discussions to achieve balance between native and nonnative speaker participation in class.

Similar findings were reported in Chowdhury and Phan (2008), who examined the perceptions of the politics of TESOL of Bangladeshi EFL teachers studying for a Master’s degree in TESOL in Australia. The participants in this study were very straightforward about their viewpoints toward the TESOL program they attended in terms of the applicability of what was taught. They used strong expressions when speaking of the Anglo-centric content of their TESOL courses, such as “such training may reflect some hidden agendas”, “there is some sort of brainwashing going on implicitly”, or “they (the West) are not going to talk about your real needs if it doesn’t benefit them” (p. 313). That said, these participants were also very clear-minded about the kind of reality to expect from their training. One teacher emphasised that even though the needs of developing countries might not be properly catered in Western TESOL programs, course contents can be adjusted to suit particular contexts, and it should be EFL countries’ responsibility to address this accordingly, rather than relying on others for help. This finding nicely resonates with what Kumaravadivelu (2001) proposes as a pedagogy of ‘particularity’ and ‘practicality’, which encourages teacher learners to learn the general but teach according to the particular, and to generate theories from practice. It would therefore be interesting to explore whether such progressive thinking is echoed in other TESOL teachers undergoing training in Inner-Circle contexts.
Also researching teachers in training, Wolff (2015) interviewed participants of an MA TESOL program in the US, and found that many of them criticised the missing link between theory and classroom practice in the curriculum. The participating teachers agreed that the program equipped them with TESOL knowledge and skills necessary to teaching in a second language context (e.g., teaching English in Inner-Circle countries), but not all of them believed that it prepared teachers as well for other contexts.

Concerning the post-training period, Pham (2004) investigated the teaching practice of three Vietnamese teachers of English who had attended postgraduate TESOL courses in Australia, focusing on their thoughts, beliefs, and implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The results showed that the teachers valued the CLT theory they learned from their training abroad, but were “doubtful and confused as to how it could be realised in practice” (p. xi). Through class observations and in-depth interviews with the returnee participants, he found that they could only make surface application of CLT; deeper changes in beliefs and values were still absent, which was claimed to be due to systemic, cultural and personal constraints.

In a more recent study, Pham (n.d.) surveyed the overall professional experience of teachers returning to their local working environment after overseas training. The teachers, who valued their knowledge and desired to implement it, nonetheless encountered multiple systemic, cultural, contextual and personal constraints, necessitating compromises in pedagogical approach and practice. Pham identified a three-phase development in the participants’ professional reintegration: ambition — the aspirations and expectations the teachers had before commencing their overseas study, and initially on return; complication — the tension between the teachers’ desire to change and the constraints of local conditions; and resolution — the compromises in teachers’ pedagogical beliefs that reflected these local constraints and that subsequently informed their practice. Pham’s study therefore partly dovetails with the current study, which explores the experiences of a similar sample, but within the more narrowly-defined topics of teacher beliefs, autonomy, and work satisfaction.

This line of research foregrounds the discrepancy between theory and application in TESOL utilising different research instruments, from document analysis (Govardhan et al., 1999), participant interviews and observations (Chowdhury & Phan, 2008; McKnight & Turner, 1995; Pham, 2004, n.d.), to experimental research in which adaptations were suggested and/or made to TESOL programs to make them more relevant (Kamhi-Stein, 2000; Liu, 1998; Yeh, 2011). These studies, however, have mainly focused
on reporting realities of the application-theory gap. They did not explore how TESOL teachers who had previously undergone training in overseas programs dealt with this challenge to conduct their everyday teaching, and whether they were able to overcome it and exercise their teaching autonomy. Previous research has addressed this point only very briefly. For example, Chowdhury and Phan (2008) suggested that TESOL teachers should not rely totally on input from training programs when conducting their teaching practice, but adapt learnt knowledge and skills to suit their own teaching contexts. This research, however, did not investigate how this practice of theorising from practice was implemented by teachers. Therefore, there is a need for further research on the teaching practice of TESOL teachers undergoing training in Inner-Circle countries or following Inner-Circle-based curricula, focusing on investigating practising teachers’ ability to empower themselves to be able to teach within sociocultural and contextual constraints of their local contexts (i.e., exercising their autonomy).

2.4.3. The impact of SLTE on teachers’ perceptions toward the profession
Although there have only been a handful of studies (e.g., Chowdhury & Phan, 2014; Le & Phan, 2012; Li & Edwards, 2013; Macalister, 2016) that investigated TESOL teachers’ professional experiences after they had undergone training in Inner Circle teacher education programs, a common theme emerging from these studies is that apart from changes in professional knowledge and teaching practice, overseas training also impacted on other aspects of the teachers’ long-term professional development which reach beyond the classroom. Participants of Li and Edward (2013) reported on the opportunity to expand and maintain their professional connections with UK-based scholars and teachers as a result of their UK training. Some teachers in this study were also invited to be mentors and trainers at local teaching events to share their knowledge and experiences after returning from the UK. Noticeably, 80% of the surveyed teachers were found to have published articles on language teaching in both national and international journals upon return. In the same vein, one Japanese participant in Chowdhury & Phan (2013) expressed that when she returned to teach in the same school in Japan after finishing her TESOL training in Australia, she felt that her overseas education had an influence on her interactions with other fellow teachers: “Because of [my] TESOL study, I can speak what I think and they may think that I am too opinionated some time but they accept my changes” (p. 208). These snippets of data demonstrate the impact of TESOL training on outside-the-classroom aspects of teachers’ professional experience, including
relationship with colleagues, connections with scholars in the field, opportunities for self-promotion and publication, and so on. While these factors play an important part in a TESOL teacher’s life, they were not often the focus of studies on the impact of teacher training, and thus were not properly addressed by existing research. Therefore, the present study will address this gap by investigating the impact of training on TESOL teachers’ professional development using the concept of teacher work satisfaction, which largely covers other important aspects of teachers’ experience in the workplace (see section 2.1.2.4).

The review of research on the impact of SLTE programs based in Inner Circle countries reveals issues that need more adequate research attention. First, more research is needed to investigate the extent to which TESOL teacher education programs can impact on teachers’ beliefs about the teaching of English as an international language. Second, given the current dominant research efforts made toward critiquing the applicability of TESOL programs, it is necessary to strike a balance between the practical impact of these programs and the dynamic role of teacher learners in activating their knowledge and skills and exercising their teaching autonomy. Third, much more light should be shed on how obtaining a higher degree in TESOL might influence other aspects of teachers’ professional lives, especially their work satisfaction. In addition, other contexts of SLTE programs, including localised programs offered by Inner-Circle institutions in non-Inner-Circle contexts, are also fertile research grounds where fruitful results can be obtained, as very little investigation has been done in these contexts. For TESOL teachers from Expanding Circle countries, a comparison across these different types of TESOL programs based on post-training experience will potentially be helpful and might introduce a paradigm shift in teachers’ choices of education programs. Also, in terms of methodology, most of this research has been largely qualitative. While this provides thick descriptions of an investigation, it reduces the possibility of applying the research results to a wider population. The inclusion of a quantitative component, therefore, will help to break more grounds in this area of scholarly research.

Against these theoretical and empirical backgrounds, this research is developed with two main aims: 1) to explore the beliefs and practice of Vietnamese TESOL teachers after they had returned from two types of MA TESOL programs (i.e., overseas and localised); 2) to examine the impact of teacher education on teachers’ beliefs and practice. The three specific lenses through which teacher beliefs and practice are studied include teachers’ beliefs toward various issues related to the teaching of English as an
International Language (TEIL), their autonomy in teaching practice, and their satisfaction with the teaching job. These lenses are chosen as they encompass different important aspects of TESOL teachers’ professional experience and form the key trends of SLTE, as previously reviewed in the current chapter. In addition, they reflect the training content and aims of contemporary TESOL teacher education programs (as will be shown in Chapter 4 of the thesis).

2.5. Summary

This chapter has provided theoretical and empirical backgrounds to the research issue and pointed out existing gaps in the SLTE literature regarding the training of TESOL teachers in the context of increasing teacher and program mobility. It also highlights the key research inquires, which are teacher beliefs (about EIL), their autonomy in teaching practice, and work satisfaction, as well as the impact of SLTE on teacher beliefs and practice.
Chapter 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the design and conduct of the present study. The first sections (3.1-3.3) provide a brief overview of the history of mixed methods research, discuss the rationale for using it as a method of inquiry, and give a detailed description of the specific research design. Section 3.4 explains the research setting and selection of participants. Section 3.5 is dedicated to descriptions of the quantitative and qualitative instruments employed for gathering data for the research. Section 3.6 reports on the data collection procedure, while section 3.7 elaborates on the analytical procedures for data analysis. Finally, arguments are presented to confirm the validity and reliability of the research methodology.

3.1. Method of inquiry: mixed methods research
This study takes mixed methods as the main research approach. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), mixed methods research involves “collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data within a single study or within multiple studies in a program of inquiry” (p. 8). The two forms of data are then merged, connected, or embedded based on the chosen research design. The timing of the data collection is also
considered, in which qualitative and quantitative data may be collected concurrently or sequentially, with equal or unequal focus given to each body of data.

Historically speaking, mixed methods as a research methodology has experienced a number of developmental stages before being recognised as a legitimate research methodology. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) and Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) describe these periods as the formative period, the paradigm debates, the procedural developments, and recent advocacy for mixed methods research to be considered a separate design. The formative period spanned from the 1950s to the 1980s, starting with Campbell and Fiske’s (1959) introduction of the use of multiple quantitative methods to study the validation of psychology traits. Later researchers then combined both quantitative and qualitative data (Jick, 1979; Sieber, 1973). Cook and Reichardt (1979) even went further and presented ten ways to combine quantitative and qualitative data, definitively addressing the question of whether it was possible to mix two types of data that originated from different perspectives. This led to the second stage in which there were debates over the feasibility of mixing paradigms in mixed methods research (Bryman, 1988; J. K. Smith, 1983). Despite arguments that mixed methods research was unfeasible due to the difficulty of combining different paradigms, many other scholars called for looking at research from the perspective of pragmatism, which supports the belief that multiple paradigms can be used to address a cohesive set of research problems. Following this vein, starting from the 1990s, there was a shift of attention toward the procedures for designing mixed methods studies (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), many types of classification were then developed for distinguishing mixed methods research designs. This period, therefore, marked a great turn in the history of mixed methods research, whereby it managed to pass an ideological protest against it by driving away concerns over the possibility of combining paradigms, and alternatively drawing greater and more meaningful attention toward the benefits of doing so. As Miles and Huberman (1994) remark:

“Quantitative and qualitative inquiry can support and inform each other. Narratives and variable-driven analyses need to interpenetrate and inform each other. Realists, idealists, and critical theorists can do better by incorporating other ideas than by remaining pure. Think of it as hybrid vigour”. (p. 310)

The recent periods have thus witnessed a growing interest in mixed methods research. More authors have advocated for mixed methods to be recognised as a separate form of inquiry. As a result of quality works by Creswell (2003) and Tashakkori and
Teddlie (1998, 2003), mixed methods research was finally established as a legitimate form of inquiry in the social sciences. Further developments in the publishing world also highlight an increased interest in mixed methods research. For example, in 2005 a new journal called *The Journal of Mixed Methods Research* was started by SAGE Publications. The journal focuses on publishing mixed methods studies and discussions on mixed methods research across different disciplines. Moreover, in the field of applied linguistics, mixed methods was documented as the main research method for 6.8% of the articles in *The Modern Language Journal* between 1996-2005 (Magnan, 2006). More recently, Riazi and Candlin (2014) reviewed a total of 40 mixed methods studies in language teaching and learning published between 2000 and 2011 in SCOPUS-indexed journals and concluded that mixed methods has made significant contributions to our understanding of language teaching and learning issues. Alise and Teddlie (2010) in their study on the prevalence rates of research methodological approaches across the social/behavioural sciences, also found that mixed methods research was used frequently for applied disciplines (16%). This increasing popularity further strengthens its position as “the third methodological movement” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 2) alongside quantitative and qualitative research.

### 3.2. Rationale for using mixed methods research

There are three main reasons why mixed methods research is used for the present study. First, the mixed methods approach allows the researcher to draw on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research and reduce the weaknesses of both approaches (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Dörnyei, 2007; R. B. Johnson & Turner, 2003; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). While qualitative research offers opportunities for in-depth investigation of a research problem, it is often critiqued as being too context-specific and inadequate in terms of applying the research results to a larger population. Quantitative research, on the other hand, can result in greater generalisation of research findings by making it possible to examine a large number of participants through the collection of numeric data. At the same time, quantitative methodologists are under the criticism of simplifying the subject matter and failing to obtain in-depth contextual information about research participants. The combination of the two methods, therefore, can eliminate the weaknesses of each method and maximise their strengths, thus providing both depth and breadth to an investigation. The second reason for using a mixed methods approach is that, due to its capacity of mixing research paradigms and collecting both quantitative and
qualitative data, mixed methods research allows for what Dörnyei (2007) refers to as “multi-level analysis” (p. 45). That is, in collecting, analysing, and interpreting two different types of data, one narrative and the other numeric, mixed methods researchers are given the opportunity to investigate a research issue at both individual and societal level. Their analyses therefore are likely to be thorough and comprehensive. Third, various scholars have postulated that the use of mixed methods research provides stronger inferences and application of the research results, as it is able to reach a larger audience (Dornyei, 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The impacts of the research are thus greatly strengthened.

On a practical level, the employment of mixed methods research meets the needs of the current investigation. First, it makes for a more complete understanding of the research problem, in this case the professional experience of Vietnamese TESOL teachers taking part in two different types of TESOL programs (overseas and localised programs). Specifically, the quantitative component would allow contact with a larger number of these teachers than following a qualitative approach only, and offer an overview of their experience, while the qualitative part focuses on more detailed experience of a smaller number of participants for in-depth knowledge. Combining data in this way allows the post-training professional experience of Vietnamese TESOL teachers to be explored in great depth and breadth. Furthermore, as previous research on the same topic has been mostly qualitative (see section 2.3), the collection of both numeric and narrative data in the present research yields fruitful and valuable results.

3.3. Research design

This study is situated in the interpretive paradigm, which adopts the belief that reality is socially constructed and can be interpreted through investigation of human beings’ subjective experiences of the world (Willis, 1995). The study, therefore, adopts the Sequential Explanatory Design, following Creswell and Plano Clark’s (2007) and Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009)’s classification of mixed methods models in educational research. Basically, this two-phase model aims at using qualitative data to explain or build upon initial quantitative results. The quantitative data is collected and analysed first, followed by qualitative data collection and analysis. The qualitative data is to provide further explanation and elaboration for the quantitative findings. For the present study, the quantitative data offer a general view of the impacts of TESOL training programs on the
beliefs and professional practice of Vietnamese TESOL teachers. The qualitative narrative component considers individual experiences and provide in-depth explanations.

In terms of the relative emphasis of each component in a mixed methods study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007), this study gives priority to the qualitative component, since an in-depth investigation of teacher beliefs and practice must involve multiple qualitative instruments for data collection. Quantitative instruments, though important, might not capture extensively teachers’ thinking and practice. The quantitative and qualitative phases merged when the quantitative results provided directions for the selection of TESOL texts for document analysis, participant selection, and modification of the interview protocol. The data sets were merged during the reporting and interpretation/discussion stage (see Figure 3.1 for a diagram of the study design).

![Figure 3.1. Visual model for mixed methods sequential explanatory design](image)

**3.4. Research setting and participants**

All targeted participants were Vietnamese teachers of English who at one point in their professional life underwent Master’s level training in either an overseas or a localised program. Specifically, there were two groups of participants.
Group 1 comprised 45 full-time lecturers (35 females and 10 males) at 12 Vietnamese public universities who had attended one of 15 different TESOL programs in Australia, New Zealand, the UK, and the USA (hereafter referred to as ‘overseas program’). The earliest participant completed their study in 1996 and the most recent in 2014. Their ages ranged from 26 to 53 ($M=35.1; SD=7.7$); their teaching experience ranged from 4 to 29 years ($M=12; SD=7.3$). These were among the elite teaching staff at their respective institutions who therefore had the opportunity to pursue further training in English teaching in Inner-Circle institutions. They were assisted by many scholarship schemes as a result of the country’s open door policy since 1986 (Hoang, 2010; Wright, 2002). In this report, number pseudonyms (Teachers 1-10) are used to refer to participants who attended overseas programs.

Group 2 comprised 40 teachers (29 females and 11 males) who had attended four joint programs offered by Australian institutions in partnership with a Vietnamese institution in Vietnam (hereafter referred to as ‘localised programs’). The earliest participant finished their program in 2001, and the most recent one completed in 2014. At the time of data collection, all had returned to teach in their home institutions. Twenty-five were full-time lecturers at eight public universities in Vietnam, and 15 were working at either K-12 English-medium international schools, or private English language institutions. Their ages ranged from 25 to 57 ($M=30; SD=9.1$); their teaching experience ranged from 3 to 30 years ($M=9; SD=8.1$). Letter pseudonyms (Teachers A-J) are used to refer to participants who were trained in localised programs.

In terms of the participants’ workplaces, although some teachers in the two groups worked in the public sector and other worked for private institutions, it should be noted that at the time of the research they all were conducting their teaching in broadly similar macro environments: they taught students who shared similar characteristics, worked in institutions that shared somewhat comparable codes of practice, and were under the same influence of larger language education policies enacted in the country.

3.5. Data collection instruments

This mixed methods study employed both quantitative and qualitative instruments for collecting data. Specifically, questionnaires were used, followed by interviews, observations followed by retrospective interviews, and document analysis.
3.5.1. Questionnaires

As a written instrument in which respondents react to a series of questions or statements about an issue under research (Brown, 2001; Dörnyei, 2007), questionnaires have become greatly popular in social science research. One of the core strengths of questionnaires is their ability to collect a large amount of information in a short amount of time and in a form that is readily accessible (Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). This makes administering questionnaires highly effective in terms of saving the researcher’s time, effort, and financial expenses. Also, according to Bryman (2012), a well-designed questionnaire can help to reduce interviewer bias and increase the reliability of the data gathered, as well as enable the researcher to elicit attitudinal information that even respondents themselves may not be aware of.

In light of these advantages, for this study a questionnaire was used to quantitatively examine the teaching beliefs, autonomy in teaching practice, and work satisfaction of the participants. The questionnaire comprises four parts. Part 1 elicits participants’ demographic information (age, years of teaching experience, and study and work experience); part 2 explores teachers’ beliefs about teaching English as an international language; part 3 investigates the teachers’ teaching autonomy; and part 4 elicits information on their work satisfaction level. The response scale for the questions in parts 2, 3 and 4 follow a 5-point Likert scale format, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The statements were written so that there is a good combination of positively-stated and negatively-stated items; this is to avoid a response set in which respondent’ answers fall only on one side of a rating scale (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). The following paragraphs will provide further descriptions of the main sections of the questionnaire.

Part 2 of the questionnaire consists of six statements on teachers’ beliefs about various aspects of teaching English as an international language (TEIL). Specifically, the teachers were inquired about their attitudes toward the following topics, including i) different English varieties, especially non-Inner-Circle varieties; ii) the dichotomy between native and non-native teachers of English; iii) the necessity of English teachers having native-like English proficiency; iv) the importance of understanding one’s teaching context; v) teaching culture in EIL; and vi) the selection of English teaching methodology (see Appendix A for details of the questionnaire).
Part 3 comprises a set of questions on classroom teaching realities adapted from Pearson and Hall’s (1993; see also Pearson & Moomaw, 2006) Teaching Autonomy Scale (TAS). The TAS examines two dimensions of teaching autonomy: general autonomy, which relates to classroom standards of conduct and personal on-the-job decision making; and curriculum autonomy, which concerns selection of teaching materials, and instructional planning and sequencing. As Pearson and Hall’s TAS targeted primary and secondary school teachers whose teaching conditions and students differ from participants of the present study, some items were adjusted to make them more relevant to teaching at university level. For instance, a statement on ‘teachers’ control over students’ standards of behaviour’ was changed into ‘teachers’ freedom to set expectations for student learning’, based on the conceptualisation of teacher autonomy as involving teachers’ ability to foster learner autonomy (Little, 1995, 2000). Cross-checking items that are similar in meaning but phrased differently were also omitted to reduce response time. The adapted TAS therefore has 11 statements (instead of 18 as in Pearson and Hall’s (1993) instrument): four items for measuring curriculum autonomy, and seven for general autonomy. The Cronbach’s α values for internal consistency reliability of these constructs are .71 for curriculum autonomy, and .60 for general autonomy, which are considered acceptable (Field, 2009).

Part 4 contains 23 statements to elicit responses about the teachers’ satisfaction with many aspects of their work. This part of the questionnaire was adapted from Section 3 of Kassabgy et al.’s (2011) ESL/EFL job satisfaction survey, which aims to examine various types of teaching rewards that teachers receive. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate their satisfaction with three main features of their working conditions (i.e., institutional support, professional position, and relationship with students, colleagues and supervisors), as well as intrinsic aspects of their work (i.e., seeing students’ development, and opportunities for learning and self-developing, and the stimulating nature of the job), and their overall level of job satisfaction. Teacher satisfaction level was also measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 being ‘very dissatisfied’ and 5 being ‘very satisfied’). In addition, there were three scenario-based items that requested information about reaction from workplace supervisors, colleagues, and students as participants first returned to teach from their Master’s level training. For these questions, two answer options were provided, alongside an open-ended option for participants to fill in their own response. The purpose of these questions was to elicit more
detailed information regarding overseas- and localised-trained teachers’ level of satisfaction with their work relationships.

Before actual dissemination, the questionnaire underwent an initial piloting process. As questionnaires do not come out in perfect shape on the very first attempt (Oppenheim, 1992), piloting helps to ensure the validity of a questionnaire as a research instrument. Five respondents with the characteristics of potential participants were sent the first draft of the questionnaire, together with questions about its comprehensibility, appropriateness, and length. After receiving feedback from the pilot respondents, the questionnaire was revised and shortened. Specifically, some crosscheck questions were removed to reduce the number of items, and thus response time; also, ambiguously-phrased items were rephrased. The questionnaire was not piloted with a larger number of participants due to the difficulty in accessing participants with overseas and localised training experience, as in Vietnamese universities these teachers were still in the minority compared with locally-trained teachers.

The questionnaire was written and delivered in English. The researcher did not provide a Vietnamese translation for the questionnaire for two main reasons. First, not all terms and concepts used in the questionnaire are translatable into Vietnamese without losing meaning (e.g., the notions of ‘English varieties’ or ‘Communicative language teaching’). Second, as targeted participants were graduates of English-medium Master’s level training programs, it was assumed that they should not have any difficulty comprehending and responding to the questionnaire.

3.5.2. Interviews
While questionnaires enable surveying a large number of potential participants, interviews necessarily focus on much smaller numbers. There are generally three main advantages of using interviews in social science research: i) with interviews the researchers can probe for the respondent’s thinking with great richness and spontaneity; ii) interviews achieve higher response rates than questionnaires, since researchers are in personal contact with interviewees; and iii) the face-to-face interaction between a researcher and a participant ensures and enhances the participant’s motivation to take part in the research (Creswell, 2012; Fontana & Frey, 1994; Oppenheim, 1992). Given these general strengths, interviews were chosen as the main instrument for collecting qualitative data to add depth to the present study.
All interviews conducted in this research were semi-structured, which means they were “based around a set of topics and a loosely defined set of questions” (Borg, 2006, p. 203). Semi-structured interviews are used extensively in educational research as their loose structure allows the researcher to develop rapport with the participants and thus to obtain richer data (Anderson & Burns, 1989; Fontana & Frey, 1994). At the same time, the researcher is still provided with a list of core probing issues that will guide them through the interview process (Cohen & Manion, 1994). For the present study, the interview had two crucial aims: elicit further explanations about what participants indicated in their survey responses, and discover the impact of TESOL teacher training on the teaching beliefs and professional experience of the participants. Therefore, the survey questions were designed according to different themes following key research issues (i.e., teachers’ teaching beliefs, teaching autonomy, and work satisfaction). For each of these issues, there were specific questions that asked respondents to comment on the role of the teacher training program they attended. Before the interviews were actually conducted, the interview questions were piloted with four teachers who had the same characteristics as targeted participants. Adjustments were then made to the initial interview protocol regarding the types of questions asked. For example, more specific questions that required participants to provide examples from teaching and learning to illustrate their opinions were added.

Because of its individualised nature, a separate interview schedule was developed for each participant prior to the interview (see Appendix B for examples of individualised interview schedules). Each interview lasted from 45 to 75 minutes and was audio-recorded. The participants could choose to be interviewed in English or Vietnamese. Among 20 interviewees, one chose English as the language of communication and the rest preferred to be interviewed in Vietnamese.

3.5.3. Observations followed by retrospective interviews
As two of the main research goals are to examine teachers’ autonomy in teaching practice and the impacts of TESOL training on this aspect of teachers’ professional lives, observations were employed as another qualitative data collection instrument to shed light on the actual teaching of the participants. Observation allows the researcher to obtain direct evidence of the participants’ behaviour, and enables the collection of a large amount of descriptive data (Borg, 2006; Bryman, 2012). This instrument has therefore been used widely in research on language teachers’ classroom teaching (e.g., Farrell,
In most of these studies, the researchers played the role of a non-participant, and the number of observed sessions per teacher varies from one to ten, depending on the research purposes. As for the present study, observation sessions were conducted with three overseas-trained participants who taught at a Vietnamese public university. Since observational data is more valid if collected on different occasions and over a period of time to reduce teachers and students’ reactive behaviours (Borg, 2006), each participant was observed for three sessions over a period of four weeks. The researcher took a non-participant role in observation and collected classroom happenings that either demonstrated or could potentially demonstrate teachers’ autonomy in teaching practice. A classroom observational protocol that matches the criteria for curriculum and general autonomy was used to guide the observation (see Appendix C for details of the protocol). Field notes were kept during observation sessions and later written into key instructional episodes (Borg, 2006), which recorded the main happenings in an autonomy-related classroom event.

To obtain clarification of classroom observation episodes and prevent misinterpretation of teacher behaviours, retrospective interviews were employed. This type of “process tracing” (Fang, 2006, p.70) self-reported verbal instrument has been used since the 1950s to study teachers’ decision-making when teaching, and is claimed to be able to capture a participant’s thought processes, thus allowing the researcher to better understand motivations behind teaching practice (Ericsson & Simon, 1993; Fang, 2006). The retrospective interview sessions followed right after or within the following three days of each observation session. In these interviews, the researcher asked the observed teachers to reflect on their classroom behaviours in key instructional episodes identified during the preceding observation session. The purpose was to probe the extent to which the teacher was consciously/unconsciously exercising their teaching autonomy in the classroom (see Appendix D for an example of retrospective interview questions). Retrospective interviews were chosen over stimulated recalls (Gass & Mackey, 2000) as in the present study teachers were asked to reflect on their teaching practices based on questions about critical incidents posed by the researcher without being given any audio or video stimuli. Each retrospective interview lasted between 15 and 30 minutes and was audio-recorded.
3.5.4. Document analysis

Apart from self-report and verbal instruments, this research also utilised TESOL documents as a source of data for an overview of the characteristics of TESOL programs that the participants attended. As a qualitative research instrument, document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating written texts and images that are created without a researcher’s intervention, including both printed and electronic material (Bowen, 2009). Documents, according to Patton (2002), can provide background information and historical insight into a research context in a cost-effective and non-obtrusive manner, thus adding valuable supplementary data to an investigation. Also, document analysis can be a useful tool to verify or confirm findings from other sources, thereby enhancing the credibility of research if the documentary evidence is convergent, or allowing room for critical comparative analysis if there is divergence of information (Angrosino & Mays de Pérez, 2000). For the present study, document analysis was used to serve both of these purposes: to provide background data about the TESOL programs the teacher participants attended, and to make comparisons, based on the analysis, between what the programs claimed to offer their students and what they did in reality. A total of 19 sets of text were collected for analysis according to the number of programs attended by all participants (15 from overseas programs and four from localised programs). These documents included program descriptions and introductions, and course descriptions of TESOL subjects, all of which were made available online. Details of how these TESOL texts were analysed will be given in Section 3.7 of this chapter.

3.6. Data collection procedure

The data for the present study were collected following a Sequential Explanatory Design (see Figure 3.1). First, the questionnaire was launched through an online platform, specifically the online survey tool available through the Griffith University system. As the researcher targeted a large number of participants who were based in different geographical venues across Vietnam, the online survey form with its technological convenience helped make the questionnaire more easily available (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). Once launched, the link to the questionnaire was targeted to participants via email. During this process, the researcher employed the snowball sampling technique (Dörnyei, 2007), whereby a few people who met the participation criteria was first identified; these participants then suggested further appropriate members of the population. A total of 97
responses were obtained, of which 85 were valid. The invalid responses were those in which respondents participated in a Master’s program in Education or Educational Management, which is not directly related to targeted courses of the present study (i.e., MA in Applied Linguistics or TESOL).

After the first phase, questionnaire data were roughly analysed and organised into two groups, corresponding to two groups of overseas-trained and localised-trained participants. Based mainly on individual willingness (as indicated in the questionnaire), and the researcher’s ability to access the participants, ten participants from each group were selected to take part in the interview phase. TESOL documents were also selected for analysis based on the questionnaire findings.

Concurrent with interviews, six observation sessions, each of which lasted for approximately 100 minutes, were conducted with three overseas-trained participants over a period of four weeks. These three participants were chosen for observation as they taught at a university in Central Vietnam where the researcher was granted frequent access. Also, the fact that the researcher and these teachers were departmental colleagues and had known and worked with each other before made them more open to give the researcher access to their classroom. The observations were arranged at times most convenient for the participants.

3.7. Data analysis
This section details the methods and procedures of data analysis conducted in the present study.

3.7.1. Analysis of quantitative data – Descriptive and inferential statistics
The questionnaire results were analysed using SPSS 22.0. As for the survey section on teacher beliefs about TEIL (Part 2), all negatively-worded items first underwent a reverse-scoring procedure. After that, descriptive statistics were conducted to obtain the teachers’ percentage of agreement toward each of the items. For Part 3 that explores teachers’ teaching autonomy, the participants’ total autonomy scores were calculated by adding the points of all items measuring general and curriculum autonomy. Basic statistics (means and standard deviations) were then computed to obtain an average autonomy score. Additionally, to identify any statistically significant difference between perceived general and curriculum autonomy of teachers from each group, the data were normalised, tested
for normal distribution, and compared using a Wilcoxon signed-rank test, a non-parametric test used for comparing two repeated measurements on a single sample (Field, 2009). To compare the difference in autonomy scores between overseas- and localised-trained teachers, a Man-Whitney $U$ test, a non-parametric test used to test the difference between two different variables and different samples (Field, 2009), was conducted. Regarding Part 4 which requested information about the participants’ job satisfaction, means and standard deviations were computed to obtain their levels of satisfaction with all work aspects under survey. Additionally, percentages of frequency were calculated for items that required participants to indicate how their supervisors, colleagues, and students reacted after they returned to teach from overseas or localised training.

3.7.2. Analysis of qualitative data – Content analysis
Content analysis was employed to analyse qualitative data of the present study, including individual semi-structured in-depth interviews, observational data, retrospective interviews, and document analysis. The generalised sequence of this type of analysis involves coding for themes, looking for patterns, making interpretations, and constructing theory (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). As “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), content analysis has the benefits of being i) objective: This means that the analysis is done according to explicit rules, allowing different researchers to obtain similar results from the same documents or messages; ii) systematic: The decision to include or exclude content for analysis is based on consistent rules, eliminating the possibility of including only materials that support the researcher’s viewpoints; and iii) generalisable: The findings generated by the researcher can be applicable to other similar situations (Prasad, 2008).

In the present study, qualitative content analysis was carried out in the form of “thematic analysis”, which is a method for “identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 6). This approach involves not only sufficiently organising and describing a data set, but also interpreting many aspects of the research issue (Boyatzis, 1998), thus discovering the “underlying deeper meaning of the data” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 246). The focus of thematic analysis, therefore, is on the content of a text, or on ‘what’ is said rather than ‘how’ it is said, and the ‘told’ rather than the ‘telling’ (Riessman, 2004, p. 706).
Let us now turn to reporting the procedure of thematic analysis employed in the present study following Braun and Clarke (2006) and Dörnyei (2007). First, the whole data set was read through and segments relating to the three main research issues (e.g., teacher beliefs about TEIL, teaching autonomy, and work satisfaction) were highlighted. Second, relevant segments were initially coded, which means codes were given to data items that appeared interesting and significant to the researcher (Braun & Clark, 2006). All codings were done in Microsoft Word. For each data set, codes were highlighted and collated together in a separate file. Extracts of data that could be used later in research reports were also gathered with corresponding codes. Third, the data were compared across different data sets to identify common themes, following Strauss and Cobin’s (1990) constant comparative method. These themes were then reviewed and further refined. This thematic analysis procedure was conducted with interview and observational data, and TESOL documents.

The observational data were written into ‘key instructional episodes’ (Borg, 2005). A total of seven episodes were identified as related to teaching autonomy (based on the predesigned observation protocol). These observational findings were then crosschecked with retrospective interviews to determine the absence or presence of autonomy in teachers’ observed teaching sessions. The observational data and retrospective interviews were also analysed according to the thematic analysis procedure outlined above.

3.8. Reliability and validity of the research methodology
In the present study, different methods were used to ensure the reliability and validity of the research methodology, including piloting, data triangulation, and member checking.

First, piloting was conducted with for the quantitative instrument (questionnaire) and the interview schedule to enhance the quality of the questionnaire and interview questions, ensuring that, as far as possible, their meanings were clear and straightforward to participants (see details of piloting in sections 3.5.1 and 3.5.2 of this chapter).

Data triangulation was also a crucial feature that strengthens the research design. According to Creswell (2012), triangulation is “the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals (e.g., a principal and a student), types of data (e.g., observational field notes and interviews), or methods of data collection (e.g., documents and interviews) in descriptions and themes” (p. 259). Information gathered from different
sources, in its turn, enhances the accuracy of the findings. In the case of the present study, data collected from the questionnaire were further supported and clarified by interview sources. Similarly, observational data provided useful insight and ‘thicker descriptions’ (Cowie, 2009) to participants’ claims in their interview accounts. Retrospective interviews following observation also added another level of reliability to the interpretation of observational data. Additionally, the analysis of TESOL documents enriched the findings as it provided further information on participants’ learning experience in their respective Master’s level TESOL programs.

Finally, member-checking was utilised to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings and interpretations. For the present study, the researcher summarised key themes arising from interviews with five overseas-trained teachers and five localised-trained ones, sent the summaries to them via email, and asked the participants to comment on the appropriateness of the themes (e.g., how well do they match their viewpoints?), and the accuracy of the interpretations. All participants’ responses were received within two weeks, and a few minor adjustments were made to the interpretations.

3.9. Summary

This chapter has provided detailed descriptions of the research methodology for the present study, including the research design, research settings and participants, data collection procedure, and data analysis (see Table 3.1 for a summary of the research methodology). The following chapters will offer an overview of the TESOL programs and present and discuss the research findings as borne out of the above-described research methods.
Table 3.1. Summary of research methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Instruments</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1. How does participation in overseas and localised TESOL programs impact on the beliefs about teaching EIL of Vietnamese teachers of English? Specifically, 1.1. What are their beliefs about teaching English as an International Language (TEIL)? 1.2. How does teacher education impact on these beliefs?</td>
<td>Quantitative and Qualitative</td>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Content analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. What is the professional experience in post-training periods of overseas- and localised-trained teachers in terms of their classroom teaching realities? Specifically, 2.1. To what extent do they exercise their autonomy in teaching practice? 2.2. What roles do teacher education courses play in intensifying and/or mitigating their autonomy?</td>
<td>Quantitative and Qualitative</td>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
<td>Descriptive and inferential statistics</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews; Classroom observations followed by retrospective interviews</td>
<td>Content analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What is the professional experience in post-training periods of overseas- and localised-trained teachers in terms of their work satisfaction? Specifically, 3.1. How satisfied are they with their teaching jobs? 3.2. How does prior teacher training experience have an influence on their work satisfaction?</td>
<td>Quantitative and Qualitative</td>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics</td>
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<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Content analysis</td>
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Chapter 4

OVERVIEW OF TESOL TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

“Well, Diotallevi and I are planning a reform in higher education. A School of Comparative Irrelevance, where useless or impossible courses are given. The school's aim is to turn out scholars capable of endlessly increasing the number of unnecessary subjects.”

Umberto Eco, Foucault's Pendulum

This chapter provides a window into the characteristics of the overseas and localised programs attended by participants of the present study through content analyses of program documents, including program introductions, course titles and course descriptions (where necessary). The chapter starts with an overview of the TESOL programs and their geographical locations as well as general characteristics. The next section presents information collated from program introductory sections, which reveal the programs’ missions, aims, general teaching and learning content, as well as their credibility and values. The final section focuses on analyses of course offerings to gain deeper insight into the content of teacher education. Throughout the chapter, pseudonyms will be used to refer to program names, with overseas programs labelled as OP, and localised programs as LP. It should also be noted that the program websites were accessed in the period between January and September 2015; therefore, all obtained documents represent the program features as of that point in time.

4.1. The TESOL programs: their locations and general characteristics

4.1.1. Overseas programs

Participants of the present study attended 15 different overseas Master's level TESOL programs offered by higher education institutions of four Inner-Circle English-speaking countries, including USA, UK, Australia, and New Zealand. Specifically, six programs were based in the US, five were Australian-based, two were in the UK, and one in New Zealand. All overseas training took place in the respective countries where the programs were held. All courses in these programs were delivered by staff of the Inner-Circle institutions. The program length varied from one to two years of full-time study. These TESOL programs were all housed in departments, schools, or faculties of languages, education, or humanities and social science of their institutions.
In terms of entry requirements, all overseas programs had English proficiency requirements for their participants, with minimum IELTS scores ranging between 6.5-7.5, and 89-100 for TOEFL iBT scores. Teaching experience was not required for most programs, with an exception of one Australian program (OP12) which required TESOL applicants to have at least one year of teaching experience.

4.1.2. Localised programs
Four localised MA TESOL programs were attended by the research participants. All these programs were offered by Australian universities in partnership with universities or English language institutions in Vietnam. Among them, one was based in Hanoi and three were in Ho Chi Minh City. The programs were between one and a half to two years long. However, the study period did not span over a full semester, as in the case of most overseas programs. The face-to-face learning periods often took place in a few weeks of each semester and for the rest of the semester, participants completed their assignments on their own and were encouraged to be in regular email contact with their course lecturers. Another difference from overseas programs was that the teaching load of localised programs was divided between Vietnamese and Australian lecturers; the latter often travelled to Vietnam twice a year to deliver courses. In addition, a major catch of these localised programs, which is deemed to make it more preferable than purely local programs, is that at the end of their training, participants are awarded a degree from the participating Australian universities. The desire to have an internationally recognised degree (Chowdhury & Phan, 2014), therefore, is often seen as one of the main sources of motivation for Vietnamese teachers to opt for localised TESOL programs, as stated in LP3’s introductory statements.

The language proficiency requirement of localised programs was a minimum IELTS score of 6.0 (LP 3) or 6.5 (LPs 1, 2, 4). No teaching experience was required for entry to all the four programs.

4.2. Overview of the TESOL programs: what they are and what they offer
A content analysis conducted with program introductions electronically available on program web pages reveals important themes and provides useful insight into the purposes, values, and characteristics of the surveyed TESOL programs.
4.2.1. The knowledge base of TESOL teacher education

In terms of learning content, overseas and localised TESOL programs shared many similarities. The TESOL knowledge base that course participants were to be equipped with if they studied in the programs was stated clearly in all 19 program introductions. Particularly, these programs promised to provide participants with a broad knowledge and in-depth understanding of key areas of TESOL. The most commonly included subject matters across the programs were linguistics, first and second language acquisition, social and cultural factors in second language learning, theories and methods of second language teaching, testing and evaluation, research design and statistics, and curriculum and materials development. Some overseas programs also offered interdisciplinary courses to expand the knowledge base of their teacher learners, such as American studies, human communication studies, and psychology. Most of these content areas fall into the two traditionally main components of SLTE curriculum: the content component and the method component (Graves, 2009). The content component is covered in courses that supply knowledge about the target language and culture (e.g., linguistics, language and culture, etc.); while the method component covers knowledge about teaching methodologies, as demonstrated in courses such as teaching methods, testing and assessment, and materials design and development. More detailed analyses of course offerings will be presented in Section 4.3 of this chapter to provide further information about the curricula of the surveyed TESOL programs.

4.2.2. A focus on developing research-related skills

Apart from an intention to provide their participants with a comprehensive and coherent system of knowledge bases in language teaching, the overseas and localised programs included in this analysis also emphasised the importance of strengthening the research skills of prospective students. Their aims in fostering research knowledge were two-fold: 1) to enable their graduates to effectively utilise academic research results for learning and teaching, and 2) to supply them with necessary skills to engage in applied linguistics research. The following quotes taken from their program introductions are illustrative of this point:

“The TESOL program also provides educators with a research knowledge base that aids them in becoming effective consumers of research and prepares those who are interested to pursue advanced training in Applied Linguistics”. (OP1, US)
“… The second mission is to provide coursework students the opportunity to explore research options and develop specialisations for further study”. (OP10, Australia)

“Graduates of this course will be able to undertake applied research relevant to their professional responsibilities and interests in the area of TESOL”. (LP1)

Given this explicit orientation toward research, it is not surprising that all these coursework programs had research-related courses as components of their curricula. Indeed, 15 (out of 19) included courses on general research methods in education/applied linguistics as their required courses, and the four other programs included them as electives. Classroom research has been considered to bring about numerous benefits such as helping teachers to evaluate existing research and gather evidence to answer questions about language teaching and learning (Mckay, 2009), as well as gaining a better understanding of interconnected factors involved in the language learning process (K. Johnson, 1992). It is therefore reasonable that the reviewed TESOL teacher education programs aimed to emphasise research-related content in educating their teachers.

4.2.3. Creating a supportive and productive learning environment

The surveyed overseas and localised TESOL programs appeared to attach importance to creating a productive and supportive learning environment within their programs. They claimed to immerse participants in a “friendly and supportive learning environment that respects and supports everyone” (OP14, Australia). According to program introductions, this goal is actualised through 1) the implementation of a wide range of interactive learning activities, and 2) an adequate supply of learning resources. First, a combination of learning arrangements was to be conducted, including lectures, seminars, and one to one tutorials; a variety of learning activities were also projected, such as wide reading, guided discussion and supported research (OP8, UK). In addition, many kinds of oral and written assignments (e.g., giving presentations and writing research reports and articles for professional journals) were stated to be used in courses (OP6, US) to facilitate students’ articulation of their understanding of professional knowledge.

In terms of learning resources, the TESOL programs prided themselves on providing their students with a multitude of options to assist learning. In the case of OP8 (UK), these were books and journals in print, e-books, e-journals, academic and educational data bases, and multi-media tools such as Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and Weblearn resource used specifically for each module. What is noticeable is
that OP8 was the only overseas program (out of 15) that included actual descriptions of learning resources in their program introductions. All localised programs, nonetheless, considered the availability of diverse learning resources as one of their great assets. They highlighted to their prospective students that studying in the programs will entitle them the status of ‘international students’ (LP1) while still being geographically in Vietnam. They also stressed that their course participants would have access to databases of libraries of the joint Australian universities, which would be an advantage in terms of learning and research (LP 4). As access to scholarly resources is quite limited in many Vietnamese universities (Hayden & Lam, 2007), it is understandable why the joint localised programs who operated in collaboration with an Australian university focused on the availability of learning resources as one of their key strengths.

4.2.4. Theory into practice: Bridging the gap
Coupled with an emphasis on providing professional knowledge and skills and an environment that is conducive to learning, these TESOL programs seemed determined to bridge the well-known gap between theory and practice in language teacher education (Freeman, 2009; Richards, 1998). There were 13 instances found in the 19 program introductions in which the theory-practice concern was addressed. For one thing, these statements stressed that the training programs were keen to create a connection between theory and practice in educating their teacher learners, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

“The Master of TESOL helps you to understand the connections between theory and practice and the importance of developing strong principles of practice in English language teaching and learning”. (OP11, Australia)

In addition, the most common solution to maintain a balance between theoretical and practical aspects of learning, as stated in program introductions, was to provide courses that were concerned with “linguistic, psychological and sociocultural aspects of language as well as those which treat the methodological and practical aspects of language learning and teaching” (OP6, US). Based on this, teacher learners will be able to “apply the theoretical and practical learning opportunities provided in each unit of study to become accomplished TESOL practitioners” (LP1). Additionally, some programs consider the diverse teaching and research experience of their teaching staff as a warrant for an effective blend of theory and practice. For example, OP7 (UK) reasoned that because their staff are directly involved in teaching EFL and other languages
(conducting teaching practice), as well as doing research in applied linguistics (working with theory), they would be able to strike a balance between theory and practice in their teaching. It is thus evident that stressing the bridge between theory and practice seems to be one of the programs’ strategies to attract students.

4.2.5. Consideration of teaching context

Scholars in the area of second language teacher education (e.g., Dogancay-Aktuna, 2006; Freeman & K. Johnson, 1998) have long proposed that the process of educating language teachers cannot be detached from the various types of context that determine their teaching practice and their work as teachers, including sociocultural, political, and institutional contexts. In this respect, the TESOL programs examined in the present study appeared to be highly responsive, as all of them highlighted in their program introductions that their curricula took into consideration a variety of teaching contexts that their graduates might encounter. In the case of overseas programs, these anticipated teaching contexts range from English as a Second Language (ESL), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) settings, to elementary through adult levels (OP1, US), and both in the country where the program was delivered and abroad (OP1, US; OP7, UK). Also, overseas programs seemed to attempt to cast a wide net by repeatedly emphasising that their courses would cater to the needs of international teaching practitioners who wished to improve the quality of English teaching and learning in their local contexts (OP11, Australia). Some programs even indicated how this could be actualised, stating that learning in these programs will enable teacher learners to “relate current theories and debate to their own professional and national situation, and be able to contribute to the development of specific responses to the problems faced in that situation” (OP8, UK). A point worth noting, however, is that despite showing high awareness of their students’ returned teaching contexts, only two out of 15 overseas programs included details about characteristics of their student population in their introductions. For example, OP4 (US) stated that 25% of their students come from outside the US, contributing to a linguistically and culturally diverse learning environment; OP8 (UK) stressed that prospective participants will be studying in a multicultural environment with staff and classmates of different nationalities. While this does not indicate that these two overseas programs are better than others in terms of taking into account the teaching context of their students, a mention of students’ linguistic make-up could suggest that the programs might be attentive to their students’ diverse needs when
designing their courses. Further details as to whether this was reflected in these programs’ course offerings will be provided in Section 4.3 of this chapter.

Localised programs, like overseas ones, also placed an emphasis on a focus on context in their training agendas. A significant difference is that they were able to specify the Vietnamese setting as the \textit{local} context that they would prepare their graduates for. For instance, LP 1 made clear that their knowledge and skill provision was to allow students to teach and work effectively in English language programs in Vietnam. LP 3 similarly stated that the applicability and practicality of their curriculum was regularly revised by staff from the two participating universities to enhance training efficiency; their ultimate goal was to “meet the demand of increasing the quality and professionalism of English teaching in Vietnam”. In this case, localised TESOL programs could have an advantage over overseas ones as it seemed easier for them to tailor their training content to fit specific needs of a homogeneous group of students, most of whom were Vietnamese teachers of English. Whether the surveyed localised programs were able to take this advantage of working with a specific group of local teachers in their curriculum planning will be discussed later in this chapter.

4.2.6. Quality of the teaching staff

Another important theme emerging from analyses of program introductions is the quality of the teaching staff. Corresponding with their above-analysed visions of providing students with a good balance of theoretical and practical TESOL knowledge and research skills, and a productive learning environment, the programs underscored that their teaching staff were highly qualified to realise these goals. Some of the common staff qualities include their international reputation, expertise in teaching English in various settings, research excellence and innovative practice-base, and diverse backgrounds. Especially for localised programs, the fact that some of the courses would be taught by Australian lecturers was often highlighted: “The 12 MA TESOL subjects are taught and assessed by [university name] teaching staff, who visit Ho Chi Minh City twice a year” (LP2). A list of Australian staff members who would be involved in lecturing and coordinating courses in these localised programs were also provided in course planning materials. This emphasis seems to denote that an inclusion of international teaching staff is an asset to localised TESOL programs.
4.2.7. Career prospects

In line with an awareness of a wide range of teaching contexts that their graduates can work in, students’ career prospects was a recurring theme in the introductions of the surveyed TESOL programs. They were confident that studying in their programs would offer students various career options. The most frequently mentioned career option, not surprisingly, was “highly skilled and globally employable teachers” (OP8, UK). Policy makers, educators, program coordinators/managers, doctoral researchers were also commonly listed. Also, many programs were suggestive that their graduates would be presented with promotional opportunities as a result of the obtained degree. The following excerpts elucidate this point:

“Graduates of the course will be equipped to take positions of responsibility [italic added] in the planning, administration and delivery of English language teaching programs”. (OP9, Australia)

“The offshore Master of TESOL course provides students with relevant content and research based learning opportunities to allow them to become effective teachers and managers of English to Speakers of Other Languages programs in Vietnam” [italic added]. (LP1)

Such an emphasis on career prospects after graduation indicates the TESOL programs’ high awareness of their responsibility to enhance the employability of their graduates, which is also a key concern and a crucial marketing tool of many academic programs of contemporary universities worldwide (Chowdhury & Phan, 2014). This aspect of career development will be explored in detail in Chapter 7 of the thesis to shed light on the extent to which participants of these TESOL programs were able to achieve the above-indicated recruitment prospects projected by program developers.

To summarise, analyses of introductory statements of 19 overseas and localised programs attended by teachers of the present study indicate that despite being held in different geographical locations, these TESOL teacher education programs converged on certain aspects: 1) They shared many commonalities in terms of the knowledge base of TESOL and a common goal of enhancing students’ teaching and research skills; 2) They placed emphasis on balancing between theoretical and practical content in their courses, and took into consideration their participants’ context of teaching; 3) They followed the path of building strong academic programs by creating a supportive learning environment, investing in high quality teaching staff, and attaching importance to producing highly skilled and employable graduates. The key difference among overseas
and localised programs concerning how they projected themselves is in the consideration of context. Localised programs were able to indicate directly that the Vietnamese context was their concentration, while overseas programs took pride in educating teachers who could teach effectively in various global contexts. The next section will look at the curricula of these programs and discuss the degree to which the academic and professional missions they claimed to fulfil in their introductions were represented in their course offerings.

4.3. TESOL teacher education curricula: a breakdown of courses according to knowledge fields

4.3.1. General course offerings

Regarding course offerings, the 15 overseas TESOL programs attended by participants of the present study offered their students a total of 219 courses, including thesis and/or comprehensive exam modules. Among these courses, 110 were core courses, and 109 were electives. Students of these programs had to complete an average of 8.9 courses in order to graduate.

The four localised programs offered a total of 33 courses. Noticeably, these were all core courses; there was no offering of electives. On average, participants of localised programs were required to complete 8.25 courses to meet graduation requirements.

4.3.2. Breakdown of courses according to knowledge fields

Although there has been no unanimous agreement on specific content areas to be included in TESOL teacher education programs (see Graves, 2009), an analysis of course offerings in the 19 overseas and localised programs under research shows quite consistently the types of knowledge fields that were frequently included in these programs’ curricula. This strongly resonates with Stapleton and Shao’s (2016) conclusion that TESOL programs around the world share many similarities in terms of the types of courses on offer. Table 4.1 displays twelve main TESOL knowledge fields that courses of the surveyed programs can be categorised into, adapted from Stapleton and Shao’s (2016) categorisation of TESOL courses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge field</th>
<th>Overseas programs</th>
<th>Localised programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 4.1. Course breakdown according to TESOL knowledge fields
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Number of courses</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Number of courses</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teaching methods/strategies/techniques</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Society/Culture/Sociolinguistics</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Thesis/Project/Portfolio/Comprehensive exams</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>SLA theories</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Elements of linguistics</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Research methods</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Assessment/Testing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Curriculum/material development</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Education management/policy</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>TESOL in local contexts</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>ESP/EAP/Content-based</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Practicum/internship</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong>: 219 courses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong>: 33 courses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. SLA = Second language acquisition; ESP = English for specific purposes; EAP = English for academic purposes.

As evident in Table 4.1, courses on teaching methods were the top component in both overseas and localised curricula. They covered a wide range of pedagogical issues in TESOL, from the general (e.g., ‘Foundation of ESOL methods’, ‘Theories and principles of language teaching’), to the more specific (e.g., ‘Advanced principles of TESOL—Listening/Speaking/Writing/Reading focus’, ‘Technology in language teaching’, ‘Task-based language teaching’). This finding coincides with the frequency levels of knowledge fields in a worldwide survey of TESOL programs by Stapleton and Shao (2016), who also found that teaching methods courses were most frequently included among all knowledge fields. Given that coursework MA TESOL programs are often considered to be where teachers expect to enhance their teaching skills (Graves, 2000; Freeman, 2016), a dedication to teaching methodology in the curricula of the surveyed programs seems practical. This dominance of pedagogical content might also signify the TESOL programs’ effort to achieve a balance between theory and practice in their courses, reflecting one of their important training goals previously pointed out in their program introductions.
Additionally, the sociocultural aspect of English teaching and learning appears to be given ample attention in the curricula of the reviewed programs. Indeed, courses on culture/society/sociolinguistics were the second most popular across the 19 curricula. A closer look at the titles and descriptions of these courses revealed that a majority of them aimed to address the interrelation between language and culture in TESOL, taking into consideration the internationalised status of the English language (the EIL view) (e.g., ‘Teaching culture in the language classroom’, ‘Language, culture and curriculum’, ‘Language and intercultural communication’). Noticeably, 17 programs (out of the 19 that were surveyed) specifically mentioned EIL/World Englishes either in their introduction or descriptions of course content. Some programs even used students’ comments on what they had learnt about EIL as examples of training efficacy:

“The program’s introduction to English in international contexts and World Englishes gave me a solid foundation to prepare for and adapt to teaching in the Middle East”. (OP1, US)

Moreover, in the curricula of overseas TESOL programs, there were four courses that were dedicated entirely to the issues of English as an international language or World Englishes, under such titles as ‘English as a world language’ (OP7, UK), ‘English in a globalised world’ (OP11, Australia), or ‘Language variation’ (including World Englishes) (OP5, US). As for localised programs’ curricula, the EIL/World Englishes component was often incorporated into courses on sociolinguistics and intercultural communication (e.g., ‘Introduction to Sociolinguistics’, ‘Intercultural communication’), as specified in course descriptions.

Apart from courses on teaching methods and sociocultural issues in TESOL, other common course offerings covered other key areas of TESOL, including second language learning theories, linguistics, research methods, curriculum and material planning, and testing and assessment. These knowledge fields correspond with the system of TESOL knowledge bases that the programs aimed to provide their participants, as stated in their introductions. A thesis/research project option was also offered in all overseas programs, and three of the localised programs, corresponding to the programs’ goal of strengthening the research skills of TESOL practitioners.

In terms of consideration of teaching context, as seen in Table 4.1, the category of ‘TESOL in local contexts’ applies to only five courses in the curricula of overseas programs, and one in localised programs, accounting for a very small percentage of the total courses offered in both program types. The main criterion for classifying courses
into this category was that the course provides participants with “locally applicable knowledge” (Stapleton & Shao, 2016), or knowledge that would apply to specific teaching settings, levels, and groups of students. The small number of courses of this kind included in the surveyed TESOL programs mainly addressed issues such as ‘The classroom as context’ (OP8, UK), or ‘Teaching English to young learners’ (LP3). The only course that seems to cater to specific geographical and sociocultural contexts was one entitled ‘Teaching English abroad’ (OP2, US). This course claimed to offer students an understanding of “the cultural and socio-political significance of teaching English outside the US”, and equip them with methods and techniques of classroom management and material development for teaching in non-US English programs. Also, a consideration of specific teaching and learning contexts did not appear to be clearly reflected in the curricula of the four localised programs. While local adaptations might have taken place in the classroom in the actual process of delivering the program, there were no courses that made it explicit in their titles or content descriptions that they would deal with issues related to teaching English in Vietnam, or the larger regional context of Asia. This seems contradictory as both overseas and localised programs promoted the fact that their courses were appropriate for preparing students to teach in specific settings and local contexts.

To sum up, an analysis of course offerings of the 19 surveyed overseas and localised programs demonstrate some common features of these TESOL teacher education programs. First, they aimed to keep a balance between theoretical and practical TESOL issues and suggested that they were able to implement this through their offering of predominantly pedagogy-oriented courses. This shows an advance over what was reported in Govardhan et al.’s (1999), that the US-based TESOL programs they surveyed overemphasised theoretical aspects of second language acquisition and lacked adequate and systematic coverage of various teaching methods. Second, a focus on courses exploring sociocultural aspects of English usage and English teaching and learning, as shown in statements of program missions and course offerings, is appropriate, given the importance of context in educating language teachers (K. Johnson, 2006). The changing status of English and the notion of World Englishes also attracted attention of some program developers. Third, despite the programs’ stated consideration of the theory-practice concern, courses dedicated to context-specific teaching strategies were still limited in number, calling into question the extent to which these programs were able to facilitate their participants’ use of locally applicable knowledge.
4.4. Summary

This chapter offers general insights into the characteristics of the overseas and localised TESOL programs attended by participants of the present research. Content analyses of program introductions and course titles highlight key issues regarding the programs’ training aims and missions, their structure, as well as their composition in terms of course offerings. The three important issues that emerged from this program investigation are 1) the inclusion of courses that address the impact of sociocultural factors on English teaching, especially those that support the pluricentric nature of the English language (the EIL view); 2) concerns about the combination of theoretical and practical aspects of TESOL; 3) an emphasis on teachers’ enhanced career prospects after participation in Master’s level TESOL training. Taking these issues into account, the following chapters (5, 6, and 7) will present the professional experience of teachers who took these surveyed TESOL programs, focusing on their beliefs about aspects of teaching EIL, their autonomy in teaching practice, and their work satisfaction. More importantly, the impact of undertaking teacher training on these professional issues will be explored and discussed in detail, taking into consideration the extent to which the programmes meet the promises made in their marketing materials (program introductions, course structures and course descriptions).
Chapter 5

TEACHER BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE: INSIGHTS INTO THE IMPACT OF TEACHER EDUCATION

“Most people do not see their beliefs. Instead, their beliefs tell them what they see. This is the simple difference between clarity and confusion.”

Matthew Kahn, Educator

5.1. Introduction

Teacher beliefs, according to Borg (2006), are a particular aspect of teacher cognition that forms an important part of teachers’ mental lives. From a psychological perspective, beliefs are understood as understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true. This ‘feeling’ of truth, however, may not need to be based on scientific evidence as it does not require epistemic merit. For this reason, Richardson (2003) points out that teacher beliefs may not always be pedagogically true, and that teachers may hold outdated beliefs that even they themselves might not be aware of. Since beliefs have been well-documented to potentially influence teaching practice (see Farrell, 1999; Gatbonton, 1999; K. Johnson, 1992; Richardson & Placier, 2001), it would be ideal if teachers’ beliefs systems be based mainly on evidence and reasons. For this to be achieved, various scholars (e.g., Green, 1971; Freeman, 1993, 1996; Richardson, 1996, 2003) have turned to teacher education as one of the key influential factors. In particular, Richardson (1996) puts forward that teacher beliefs are generally shaped by three main sources: the teachers’ personal experience, their experience with schooling and instruction when they are students in teacher education programs, and their experience with formal knowledge, which comes from knowledge of the subject they teach and pedagogical knowledge. Among these three components, teacher education has the strong potential to influence the latter two, as a teacher training program is, first and foremost, an environment where teachers experience teaching “within a framework of studenting” (Richardson, 2003, p. 5), thereby forming and/or modifying their teaching beliefs. Moreover, its carefully designed courses are to provide teachers with a large amount of formal knowledge of the field of teaching, which likely impacts on their thinking in numerous ways.

Despite the presumably important role of TESOL teacher education in shaping teacher beliefs, up to now little research has been done into the extent to which language
teacher education can impact on the beliefs of teacher learners, especially in the case of in-service teachers who had had some teaching experience and thus held certain beliefs before entering training. The few studies conducted in this direction have shown mixed findings. While some of them indicated little change in beliefs before and after training (see Borg, 2006; Urmston & Pennington, 2008; Phan, 2008), others showed that teacher education played a role in strengthening language teachers’ existing beliefs (see Borg, 2011; Freeman, 1993; Phipps & Borg, 2007), or modifying them (Chowdhury & Phan, 2014; Pavlenko, 2003). Considering the context of research, previous studies have mostly been done with course participants whose learning and teaching backgrounds did not differ much from that of the teacher education programs. The moderate body of research that investigated the experience of study-abroad language teachers did not specifically focus on their belief change, but on the general learning experience (Phan, 2008; McKnight & Turner, 1998; Yeh, 2011). Reported adjustments of beliefs in relation to teacher training thus remain scarce. Furthermore, given the status of English as an international language (EIL), there has been little in the way of research on how the perspective of EIL is implemented in teacher education programs (Matsuda & Friedrich, 2011); how such implementation influences the beliefs of their participants is therefore even less known. As a result, one of the main aims of the current research is to address this gap by providing a focused description of the beliefs about teaching EIL held by teachers who underwent Master’s level training in TESOL, thereby teasing out the impacts of teacher education on these beliefs.

This chapter will present the findings to the first set of research question:

1. How does participation in overseas and localised TESOL programs impact on the beliefs about teaching EIL of Vietnamese teachers of English? Specifically,
   1.1. What are their beliefs about teaching English as an International Language (TEIL)?
   1.2. How does teacher education impact on these beliefs?

The key aspects of TEIL that were surveyed included the appreciation of different English varieties, the native-speakerist ideology (including the native/non-native divide and teachers’ views toward language teacher proficiency), the role of context in teaching, approaches to teaching culture, and teaching methodologies. These key issues were consolidated and extracted from key works of EIL and World Englishes scholars regarding characteristics of EIL teaching (Jenkins, 2005; Kirkpatrick, 2007, 2011, 2012, 2014; Matsuda, 2012; McKay, 2002). Throughout the presentation of teachers’ beliefs
the impacts of training will be highlighted. The quantitative and qualitative findings will be presented together according to the program type. Finally, these results will be discussed in light of relevant theories and research on EIL teacher education and language teacher cognition. Where appropriate, comparisons will be made regarding similarities and differences in beliefs and the perceived impacts of training on teachers attending two types of program.

5.2. Teachers who attended overseas programs

As English becomes widely spread and used across different countries of the world and in various areas of interpersonal communication, its standards of use have been observed and shown to vary to a substantial extent. Since Kachru and Quirk (as cited in Kachru, 1992) first argued for recognition of different varieties of English, as well as a more flexible view toward the ownership of the language, this line of thinking has subsequently been strongly supported by scholars in the field (see Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2000; Widdowson, 1998). It is not surprising, therefore, that this paradigm shift has become a component of many TESOL teacher training programs. This is reflected in the responses of 45 overseas-trained teachers of the present study when surveyed on their current teaching beliefs. The teachers were asked to indicate their level of agreement toward six statements about different aspects of TEIL: i) An understanding and appreciation of different varieties of English is necessary to English teachers; ii) Native English speakers are the ideal English teacher; iii) English teachers should have native-like English proficiency; iv) A good understanding of the educational, social, and cultural contexts of teaching is important to English teachers; v) English teachers should ensure that their teaching materials do not promote a particular variety of English or culture at the expense of others; vi) The choice of English teaching methodology should be mostly based on the models generated from traditional English-speaking countries (e.g., Communicative language teaching). Figure 5.1 summarises their answers.
As seen from the survey results, this group of teachers expressed strong support for four aspects: the importance for EIL teachers to understand and appreciate different English varieties; equality between native and non-native English teachers; the importance of understanding the sociocultural and political context of teaching; and the necessity of teaching both Anglophone and non-Anglophone cultures. However, they appeared considerably divided (agreement levels being less than 50%) when it comes to whether English teachers should have native-like proficiency, and if teachers’ choice of teaching methodology should be dominated by Western teaching methods. The next sections will report teacher beliefs regarding each of these aspects in further detail.

5.2.1. Overseas-trained teachers’ beliefs about English varieties

The first aspect of TEIL under exploration is teacher beliefs about English varieties, which are conceptualised as characterised by variations in key aspects of language use such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and pragmatic norms (Kirkpatrick, 2007; McKay, 2002). Figure 5.1 shows that after their Master’s level TESOL training, almost 90% of overseas teachers considered it important to have an understanding and appreciation of different English varieties. The interview data not only confirm this, but also reveal significant changes in their beliefs.

Before attending the TESOL programs, 9 out of 10 interviewed teachers admitted that their ideas of English had centred around Inner-Circle varieties, especially in terms of accent and pronunciation. Teacher 4 commented, “I used to think that Standard English
has to be British, American, or Australian”. This teacher also recalled her experience of orientating herself into practicing American English in the hope of obtaining an American accent. She would watch American movies or dramas many times, and repeated the movie lines following the actors. Teacher 5, on the other hand, tried hard to imitate the pronunciation of Australian English. He explained that he was once taught by a Vietnamese teacher of English who had had some training in Australia, and whom he said “had an exotic Australian accent”, which he found hard to understand at first but gradually came to appreciate. After that experience, he decided that it would be her model of good English, and practiced toward it.

The only interviewee who had some ideas about non-Inner-Circle varieties of English before participating in a TESOL course in Australia, was one who had the opportunity to study for one year in a US university as part of a student exchange program during his last year of college. This teacher, who was a senior English major student when he was in the US, recounted his story of having difficulty communicating with international students from other countries: “There were a lot of students from Nepal, India, and the Middle East in my US university, and many of them had very strong English accents. I had a very hard time understanding them at first” (Teacher 5). These encounters helped him realise people can speak English with a wide range of variability, even in an Inner-Circle English-speaking country such as the US. This experience, as this teacher stated, made him slightly question the dominant thinking that we should only learn and practice toward native English accents. However, he did not have any opportunity to look into this inquiry during the course of his stay in America, or later when he graduated and became a university teacher. The notion of World Englishes, therefore, remained vague to him.

The reason behind this native-speakerist ideology was, first and foremost, due to common (mis)perceptions of what makes “good” English. Having gone through learning experiences in which their language competence was perpetually compared with native English speakers, they were entrenched in the idea that native English proficiency is ideal and should be the norm.

“I remember back then my English teachers from secondary to high school and even university, as well as my parents - they all expected us to be able to speak English like a native speaker. All our learning materials were written by authors from the UK or the US, and we used them like bibles. I had no chance to think or believe otherwise.” (Teacher 6)
Another reason was the prevalence of international standardised English tests such as IELTS or TOEFL in Vietnam, which tested learners against native-speaker standards (see Duong, 2012). Teacher 4 raised the rhetorical question: “How could you think and teach to a different set of criteria when many of your students are studying English to get good scores in those tests?”

These teachers carried on with this way of thinking when they became teaching practitioners. Teacher 10, who had had some extensive teaching experience before her studies in Australia, said she had always referred her students to native English learning websites such as VOA (Voice of America), or BBC Learning English, believing that it would help to acquaint them with native accents of English, which she herself once found “very pleasing to the ears”. Also, in attaching much importance to native English varieties, these teachers, not surprisingly, seemed to undervalue other varieties of English. Teacher 7 recounted an incident in which a TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) listening lesson that she taught simulated a business conversation between Asian English speakers, some of whom were Korean speakers whose English accent was not familiar to her and her students. Her thinking then was: “I did not feel comfortable teaching that lesson. I did not like the idea that my students had to spend time listening to these non-standard varieties” (Teacher 7). She admitted that there was clearly a certain level of discrimination in her judgment of different forms of English then. Another teacher shared a similar experience when she took a group of her students to Singapore for a youth camp a few years earlier. Her students, on their first encounters with Singaporean English, found it intriguing that even though their Singaporean friends were very fluent, their English accent was far from “good”, according to their conceptualisation of ‘good English’. This teacher then agreed with this comment of her students and insisted that they not pick up ‘Singlish’ as it was not an appropriate model.

As evidenced from the teachers’ accounts, their attitudes toward English varieties were mostly concerned with spoken English, and were shaped from the teachers’ early years of learning English by their teachers, parents, and others in the society, and continued to be reinforced throughout their time of learning to teach. Later when becoming English teachers, they themselves, either deliberately or inadvertently, also acted as strong advocates for prioritising native Englishes over non-native varieties.

These presumably deeply-rooted beliefs, however, were challenged as the participants entered the overseas TESOL programs. The teachers’ responses during interviews were found to align with their survey answers, that after returning from further
training, a majority of them came to appreciate different English varieties, be it native or non-native. In particular, three of the teachers shared the same viewpoint that learning about the concept of World Englishes in their courses led them to accept the fact that English is nowadays used by people in many different countries, each speaking it with a different accent. This leap of perception, as one would expect, resulted from the teachers’ exposure to research and readings on issues concerning the ownership of English and the values of non-native English varieties during their training program. Teacher 4 found it intriguing that there was a growing body of research on this topic, as well as a large number of scholars such as Suresh Canagarajah or Jennifer Jenkins who had been supporting a more equal view toward English usage. This teacher, who earlier wanted to adopt an American accent, admitted that her view toward English varieties became more open, due to this emerging attitude: “There is no point in not following an ideological shift that benefits ourselves professionally”. She added that non-native English teachers would be liberated from the traditional conception of ‘standard’ English if this view were widely taken on by the society at large.

Teacher 5, who briefly came into contact with non-native English varieties during his exchange study trip in the US, was glad that he had the opportunity to read and research further on this issue in his MA program in Australia. This enabled him to provide evidence-based arguments for positions that he previously felt vaguely but could not justify.

“Sometimes while learning you question something and quickly let it go, because you do not have enough confidence that it is an issue worth considering. Your view cannot diverge from dominant thinking. However, one day you read a book or an article and find that somewhere else other people are researching and finding the answer to the exact same question you had earlier, and you just feel joy, as if you’ve discovered something really important. The MA program did that to me. It justified many of my teaching beliefs”. (Teacher 5)

Noticeably, these changes in beliefs led the teachers to adjust their teaching and their expectations for students’ language performance. As Teacher 4 adopted a more flexible view of English varieties, she also loosened her criteria for evaluating her students. She placed greater importance on their intelligibility in English communication, and insisted that they listen to a wide variety of English accents as they practiced their listening skills, believing that it would be helpful for their future communication in
Teacher 10, apart from introducing native English materials as she did before, also claimed that she paid more attention to resources written from more international perspectives, instead of mainly Anglophone-oriented materials. Whenever she could, she would take texts from more authentic sources and adapt them toward meeting her students’ needs. Her stereotype toward non-native English varieties, particularly Singaporean English, as she herself realised, had also been eliminated. Indeed, she recalled that on another trip to Singapore, she brought home an issue of The Straits Times, a popular Singaporean newspaper, and took some articles from there to use as reading materials for her students. She found this newspaper to be a good source of authentic reading as it covered a wide range of social, cultural, and political topics of great relevance to Asian readers, and thus encouraged her students to read the online version of it.

These new teaching practices that resulted from changes in teaching beliefs were evidence of the impacts of teacher education on what teachers think about various aspects of teaching, and more importantly, how this, in turn, influences the way they teach. To some teachers, nonetheless, deep-rooted beliefs were harder to change. Three of the interviewed teachers remained sceptical about the extent to which this shift toward valuing non-native English varieties would be feasible in practice, let alone influential. With more than fifteen years of teaching experience, Teacher 9 admitted that he was fascinated by the idea of International English and English as a Lingua Franca when he first came to learn about them, but from what he has observed over the years, its acceptance and implementation in systems of education is still more an ideal rather than a reality. To illustrate his point, this teacher gave examples of a myriad of teaching jobs that prefer native speaker candidates who speak Inner-Circle English varieties, many of them to teach students who would mainly use English as a lingua franca with other non-native speakers (see Braine, 1999, 2010; Moussu & Llurda, 2008). He also pointed out the fact that most English learning materials nowadays are still written according to native norms. He then concluded,

“I often remind my students that they need to be realistic. If they learn English in Vietnam they will very likely speak English with a Vietnamese accent, and they should consider that to be normal, rather than feel ashamed about it. However, they should keep practicing to perfect their English, because chances are they
would get a better job if their English is more toward the native-like end. It’s a fact!” (Teacher 9)

Clearly, this teacher acknowledged changing beliefs about English varieties based on what he experienced from the teacher training program, but his actual teaching experience led him to challenge this belief and eventually exerted a greater and lasting impact on him.

In a rather different vein, despite the knowledge gained from teacher training courses, Teacher 6 was still hesitant about adopting the viewpoint of appreciating non-native English varieties, even her own. However, as she progressed through her study and life in the US, she realised how much people’s uses of English varied and yet they were still able to study and work effectively. Besides, she recounted that one of her American lecturers in the MA program actually complimented her English, which significantly enhanced her self-confidence. In this case, first-hand experience of living and studying in an English-speaking environment led this teacher to form a teaching belief which, even though generated from teacher training, was not readily adopted by her.

5.2.2. Overseas-trained teachers’ beliefs about the native/non-native dichotomy

Apart from attitudes toward different English varieties, the overseas-trained teachers were inquired about their view about the status of non-native speaker teachers compared with native ones, i.e., whether they think native speakers are ideal English teachers. As shown in the survey results, a majority (73.9%) of the participants agreed that native English speakers are not necessarily better at teaching English than non-native ones. The teachers’ accounts during interviews provide useful insights into their thought processes, and reveal the role of teacher education courses.

Most of the interviewed teachers claimed that before going overseas to pursue a Master’s degree in TESOL, they were very sceptical about whether they could be on a par with their native colleagues. When in the same working environment with volunteer English teachers from the US, Teacher 3 was somewhat dazzled by their English proficiency, to the point that she sometimes felt herself less fluent in communication with them than she usually was with others:

“The fact that English is their mother tongue and they presumably speak it perfectly made us all think they were qualified. However, most of them were not professionally trained to teach English as a foreign language, or had very little
experience in teaching. They studied other subjects in university and just wanted to come to Vietnam to teach English for a change”. (Teacher 3)

This teacher recalled that these native speaker teachers were often assigned to teach speaking skills, and there were always a long list of students who sought to enrol in their courses.

The two interviewees who held different viewpoints in fact questioned this assumption. Teacher 7 once asked a native speaker friend about an English grammar point, and found him having difficulty explaining its usage to her, even though he certainly knew how to use it correctly. “That was my first time questioning the abilities of native speakers of English, and then I realised speaking a language well does not mean you can teach it well too”, Teacher 7 recalled.

In this respect, the teacher education programs could be seen to have provided teacher learners with the opportunity to discuss other important issues that arise in the TESOL profession, apart from basic knowledge about teaching methods and techniques. Teacher 6 made a comparison:

“I remember when I was trained as a preservice teacher at undergraduate level, we mainly focused on practicing our teaching skills. We were largely concerned about how to teach grammar and vocabulary effectively and communicatively. I think we learnt teaching more as a craft, rather than a professional field with all its self-contained and arising issues.” (Teacher 6)

Therefore, when being acquainted with the discussion against the native/non-native dichotomy in one of her TESOL courses, this teacher almost immediately engaged with it. She even decided to select it as a topic for her course essay, and was intrigued to find ample strong empirical arguments from research to challenge the long-standing belief that only native speakers can be good English teachers. She was also inspired to learn that there was a group of scholars (The Non-native English-speaking teachers (NNEST) Interest Group in TESOL) who collectively supported non-native teachers through exchanging professional help and guidance. She acknowledged that this experience strengthened her belief in the equal footing between native and non-native English teachers, which she previously considered “a pointless debate”.

To Teacher 8, coupled with knowledge gained from training, the interaction with other native English teachers in the training program in the US helped her find out that they encountered similar problems in the process of learning to teach like those of non-native speakers.
“When we worked together in groups for an assignment, I could see they [the native speakers] sometimes had problems with understanding course concepts just as I did, and we often solved them through discussions. I think we both have our strengths and limitations and we can learn a lot from each other”. (Teacher 8)

This helped to increase her confidence in herself as an English teacher, and solidify her belief in going beyond the native language boundary and placing more importance on the activity of learning to teach itself.

5.2.3. Overseas-trained teachers’ beliefs about teacher language proficiency

While the participants demonstrated a willingness to challenge their beliefs and increase their professional confidence by being open-minded to ideologies that promote equity in the profession, they were still held back by the desire to have native-like English proficiency, or the ability to use the target language that is indistinguishable from the general language competence of a native speaker, as summarised by Cook (1999) and Davies (2003, 2008). Only 26.1% of them agreed that English teachers need not have native-like proficiency, while 41.3% were undecided and 32.6% disagreed. Their interview responses strongly correspond with the survey results. Only 2 of the interviewed teachers explicitly stated that native-like proficiency was not important, as long as a teacher can conduct a good lesson which benefits her students’ learning. Their reason was that “there is no point in pursuing a goal that you know yourself is impossible to be achieved” (Teacher 9). When asked if the training program in any way influenced his thinking, this teacher straightforwardly disagreed, stating that his own learning experience in a US TESOL program somewhat reinforced the native-speakerist ideology. He recalled that some of his lecturers in the MA program usually asked non-native speaker students to proofread their writing carefully for language problems, or better, to consult tutors at the university’s Writing Center, before submitting their assignments. “Why would they “pick on” us non-native speakers? Are we the only ones who have problems with writing? Are all the native speaker students good writers?” This teacher expressed strong emotions as he raised his concern.

The preference toward native English competency in the academic world might partly explain why a majority of the surveyed participants and 4 out 10 interviewees were undecided about whether English teachers should have native-like proficiency, even though they strongly advocated for different varieties of English as well as equal appreciation of native and non-native teachers. Teacher 6’s viewpoint reflects this: “It
would be great if I could have a native-like command of English. I think many English learners would want the same too. I know after puberty this is nearly impossible, but I still prefer that my English is not so much Vietnamese-accented”. In a similar vein, Teacher 7 emphasised that English teachers should always aim toward a higher level of English proficiency, without specifying if this ‘higher level’ should eventually be native-like. Her reason was because teacher’s language proficiency plays an important part in forming the identity of an English teacher, and that good proficiency would help her to be more self-confident and thus teach better.

This kind of belief, as the interviews unfold, mostly comes from the teachers’ own perception of language teacher proficiency, rather than teacher education. These teachers could not recall any incident in which their English proficiency was discussed explicitly as a course issue. It seems that it had always been their desire to better their English so that it reached a native-like level of competence.

Four other interviewees agreed that English teachers should have native-like English proficiency. They previously held this belief, and even after training, still found it useful to rely on native speaker standards. Teacher 3 stated that learning about the movement toward valuing non-native English teachers and non-native English varieties significantly broadened her views; however, she was still concerned about the criteria by which learners’ proficiency could be judged if they were liberated from traditional standards of language use.

“From my observation, after all these discussions about World Englishes and English as a lingua franca (ELF) in courses and professional development workshops, we teachers often go back to our classroom and continue to teach and assess our students in almost the same way as we have done for many years”. (Teacher 3)

She shared that this was not always because she did not want to attempt to make change, but she perhaps needed more solid, specific examples of how to implement these ideas in practice. For instance, in some situations where fluency and intelligibility were more important, she was more tolerant toward her students’ language production than before. However, in cases where accuracy was needed, she still relied on the native speaker norms to judge her students’ competence, reasoning that they were the kind of specific examples of language use that she found helpful.
5.2.4. Overseas-trained teachers’ beliefs about culture teaching in EIL

In terms of culture teaching in TESOL, 84.8% of the surveyed teachers were of the opinion that students should be taught both Anglophone and non-Anglophone cultures in order to communicate well in English. This indicates that the participants strongly converged on the importance of cultural content in teaching EIL, and more importantly, they showed support toward the teaching of the target culture, source culture, as well as international culture, to use McKay’s (2002) terminologies. In the case of the teachers in the present research, these cultures are cultures of native English-speaking countries, their own culture (Vietnamese), and cultures of other countries in the world, respectively. The interview data support this and reveal a modification of belief.

The interviewees’ beliefs about teaching Inner-Circle cultures were challenged as they took TESOL courses. Teacher 1 admitted that her teaching of culture previously was mainly oriented toward introducing characteristics of the target British and American cultures; rarely did she include other international culture material in her lessons. Her TESOL training, however, brought to her attention the necessity of understanding other cultures to facilitate English communication.

“I remember in one session of our second language teaching course, the instructor gave an activity in which we form groups to make a list of taboos topics that should not be discussed in many cultures, including less popular ones in Asia. I found myself so ignorant then as I do not know much about other cultures, even those of our neighbour countries in South East Asia.” (Teacher 1)

This teacher then realised that for a long time she had communicated in English with people from other countries based on the cultural knowledge she had of British or American culture, which might not be wrong, but perhaps not always relevant. This led her to appreciate the multicultural learning environment of her teacher training program, where more than half of the student population were international students from many different countries. Interaction with these colleagues during training therefore significantly enhanced her cultural knowledge.

As for Teacher 4, the teacher education program in the US provided her with a broader view of culture teaching and learning. She observed that since the US is a “melting pot” of different ethnicities and cultures, US courses on culture placed a lot of emphasis on cross-cultural communication, whereas in Vietnam this received much less attention due to the economic and cultural dominance of the largest ethnic group in the
country (see Phan, Vu, & Bao, 2014). This teacher reflected on the inadequate intercultural communication skills of her students when they used English, and explained that it could be because Vietnamese teachers of English would normally have little exposure to and experience of multiculturalism if they did not travel out of the country. Therefore, the importance of intercultural communication competence might not be sufficiently stressed in their English lessons.

These emerging beliefs about the importance of having an awareness of different world cultures, as these teachers reported, were translated into their teaching after training. According to Teacher 1, it affected her selection of teaching materials. Realising that the majority of textbooks in use in Vietnam were written from the perspective of Anglophone cultures, since her return she had deliberately added extra materials that did not just provide students with language practice, but also enhanced their knowledge and understanding of various cultures, especially those from Asia. This teacher believed that such add-ons would be helpful, as she expected that her students would likely encounter many types of Asian Englishes in their future work. Teacher 4, having obtained a better view of intercultural communication, stated that when teaching a course on American culture upon returning to her home institution, she emphasised multiculturalism as a special feature of American culture, and had her students simulate and practice intercultural communication acts. “I wanted this course to be not just about knowledge, but also skills. One thing I’d like my students to take away from the course is in the present era everyone should be able to communicate effectively cross-culturally” (Teacher 4).

5.2.5. Overseas-trained teachers’ beliefs about teaching methods
Regarding teaching methods, overseas-trained teachers’ survey responses concerning the choice of methodologies were divided. 43.5% disagreed that they should mostly follow Western-based methods, 39.1% chose to be neutral, while 17.4% agreed. This suggests that their teaching philosophy was not predominantly influenced by Western teaching methodology. The interview accounts support this and add a valuable insight, that a balanced combination between Western teaching theories, with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) being the most popular choice, and consideration of local education was most preferable to the participants. Specifically, they were of the opinion that English teachers could rely on the communicative approach as a foundation of practice, and at the same time incorporate approaches based on their local educational,
social and cultural context of instruction. For example, Teacher 4 acknowledged that her study in the US consolidated many of her beliefs about CLT principles such as the effectiveness of learner collaboration in language learning, or the role of the teacher as a facilitator (Nunan, 1991; Richards, 2006). Teacher 10 noted that the courses enabled her to provide reasons for communicative teaching techniques that she often carried out. Additionally, teacher training allowed the participants to see teaching methods in a new light. Previously they often followed rigid steps in their teaching; however, having been introduced to the notion of ‘post-method’ (Kumaravadivelu, 2001), they agreed that there was not a single best method, but rather, a method that fits a teaching situation best. Teacher 1 said her current teaching was more flexible, as she saw ‘methods’ as a guiding, rather than fixed framework.

Apart from consolidating the teachers’ viewpoints on principled practices of English teaching, the training program also challenged some of their existing beliefs about good practice. Teacher 6 questioned the prevalence of CLT in many different contexts regardless of its appropriateness. Her further reading into the origin of CLT led her to notice that this framework and its principles were originally devised in an ESL setting where learner proficiency was equated with native speaker competence. Application of it in other contexts where native proficiency is not the end product, therefore, should be adapted accordingly.

“As soon as I came across this piece of information, I started to realise why for many years many of our teachers felt so detached with CLT, even though it seems a progressive approach to teaching. I think we may have been so attracted to the idea of it that we forgot to critically examine how to best use it in our context”.
(Teacher 6)

This teacher said this “little discovery” helped her gain a more refined knowledge and appropriate attitude to CLT and its application.

5.2.6. Overseas-trained teachers’ beliefs about context of teaching
Also emerging as a critical theme in teacher beliefs was their strong view of the role of context in teaching, as evident in the high percentage (95.7%) of teachers agreeing that a good understanding of the social, cultural, and political context of teaching, is crucial. It should be reiterated that in this research the socio-political and cultural context of TESOL refers to macro issues of English language teaching such as language education policies,
the status of different Englishes, the politics of TESOL education, critical pedagogy, and the like (Dogancay-Aktuna, 2006).

In particular, the interview data show that teachers’ increased understanding of context was in part due to changes in their beliefs about arising issues in the field such as an appreciation of English varieties. Teacher 7, who once had a negative view toward non-native varieties of English, found that her changing belief led her to have a better idea of context. This same teacher, who was previously prejudiced against accented English, now realised why it is essential to practice listening to non-native varieties of English.

“The selection of learning materials has to be based on students’ needs. If your students are likely to have frequent contact with other Asian varieties of English in their future work setting, at school and university we should prepare them for this”. (Teacher 7)

More notably, teacher’s changing beliefs of context were associated with the content of courses in their training programs. Teacher 5 stated that, thanks to one of the TESOL courses, he came to know about the concept of critical pedagogy, which encouraged him to be critical and realistic about the way he taught. He realised how her previous emphasis on American and British varieties of English and cultures might have given her students the false impression that these norms were superior.

In another vein, studying in a Western TESOL program allowed the teachers to compare their own teaching and learning conditions with that of the Western environment, which gave them a sharper idea of the importance of context awareness in teaching, and at the same time enabled them to reflect on their own context and how they could improve it. According to Teacher 3, even with contents offered in the program that were not directly relevant to her, such as how to help ESL learners adapt to the learning environment in the US, she still tried to make connections between the techniques under discussion and her teaching environment in Vietnam.

In summary, overseas-trained teachers experienced significant shifts in teaching beliefs toward various aspects of EIL. They came to appreciate different varieties of English, disengage with the native/non-native divide, support the teaching of diverse cultures, and develop an understanding of the social, cultural and political context of teaching. However, they appeared more hesitant when it came to other aspects such as their preference toward native-like English proficiency and the choice of teaching methodology. In this belief modification process, the teacher training programs appeared
to play the role of a knowledge provider; at the same time, the Anglophone environment also helped the teachers to reinforce or challenge what they learnt. The next section will present findings on the beliefs of teachers of localised programs to provide a comparative view.

5.3. Teachers who attended localised programs

The teachers attending localised TESOL programs showed a consistently high level of agreement in beliefs across different aspects of TEIL. Figure 5.2 presents details of their responses alongside those of teachers who attended overseas programs.

![Figure 5.2. Teacher beliefs about aspects of TEIL](image)

5.3.1. Localised-trained teachers’ beliefs about English varieties

As seen in Figure 5.2, localised-trained teachers showed complete agreement regarding whether English teachers should have an understanding and appreciation of different varieties of English. Little difference is seen between teachers attending overseas and localised programs. The interview data revealed that this resulted from what the teachers learnt in TESOL training courses, which brought about “a radical shift” in their thinking (Teacher E). This section will outline the form which this shift took.

Prior to training, like their overseas-trained colleagues, all of the 10 interviewees admitted that they attached little importance to the benefit that learning about different
English varieties could bring to their teaching as well as their students’ learning. They highly valued the native varieties of British and American English, those they were most regularly exposed to. “I simply thought if we learn English it has to be a native variety. I wasn’t aware of any dispute or debate regarding this issue”, Teacher D explained. In terms of localised varieties, five participants claimed to have very little knowledge of them due to limited contact. The other teachers originally had a low opinion of non-native forms of English, including their own variety. Teacher F, very similar to Teacher 4 of overseas programs, purposefully practiced his pronunciation based on standards of American English when he was a university student, so that his English would not be heavily Vietnamese- accented. “One day I talked to an American tourist and he commented that I had a bit of American accent in my English speech. It made me feel like my hard work somehow paid off. I didn’t want someone to say to me that I spoke Vietnamese English” (Teacher F).

The reasons for these attitudes were mainly due to traditional thinking and conduct of foreign language education in their contexts. Three teachers discussed the prevalence of learning materials that excessively promoted native English varieties. For instance, Teacher F pointed out that although the national English textbook series designed by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) featured Vietnamese characters in their language practice dialogues, the audio supplements were always voiced by native speakers who had to adopt false Vietnamese identity to act out conversations. This teacher concluded that with such strong prioritisation of native English varieties at the national level, it was almost impossible for teachers and students to think or believe differently. Meanwhile, five interviewees also associated their prior beliefs with pressure from standardised English proficiency tests such as TOEFL and IELTS, which resonates with the viewpoints of some teachers in overseas programs. As such, in trying to become good models of English for their students, the teachers invariably followed a traditional ideology that the English language is mainly defined by native varieties. While other varieties exist, they do not merit instruction nor attention.

These beliefs were overturned as the teachers were introduced to the notion of World Englishes during their training. Noticeably, there were 22 mentions of this term and other related concepts (International English and English as a lingua franca) across the ten interview accounts. Six teachers claimed that they almost immediately supported the idea of valuing different English varieties, including non-native ones. Upon reading course materials about this topic, Teacher G realised the inappropriateness of her previous
way of thinking. “That only native speaker varieties are legitimate might apply for other languages, but with a language with international influence like English, I don’t think it is true”. For Teacher F, what he learnt and discussed with other teachers during training completely changed her opinion of non-native varieties. He argued that such changing thinking should be promoted as it helped to equalise the status of English speakers in international communication. As a lecturer in Business English, he tried to convey this viewpoint to his students:

“I have been stressing to my students that in a business transaction with speakers who speak different English varieties, if we don’t favour any variety more than others, we would be able to pay more attention to what each person has to say, and less on how he says it. This makes for fair and effective communication”. (Teacher F)

Four other teachers, however, stated that it took time and contextual changes for them to actually come to uphold the idea of appreciating English varieties. Teacher B explained that in 2011 when he was doing his MA courses, Word Englishes was still a relatively new concept in Vietnam. He was strongly engaged with the topic, but did not feel that it would be readily accepted by the society at large.

“I walked out of the class feeling inspired, but was reluctant to discuss the issue with my friends who were not teaching professionals, and even those who were English teachers but did not study in the program. I knew they would not agree with me that their children should learn about Singaporean or Filipino English at the time”. (Teacher B)

However, general public opinion, as Teacher B observed, had gradually changed. He listed examples of greater economic and tourism contacts between Vietnam and other Asian countries, and concluded that there were more demands for Vietnamese learners to familiarise themselves with Asian varieties of English than before. Teacher H also shared a similar experience. She came to a conclusion that as much as she appreciated the more open attitude toward different English varieties introduced in TESOL courses, she was not attached to it until she was able to see signs of public support. “Perhaps Vietnam is a little slower than other countries to realise the need to appreciate various English varieties, but it’s because previously we did not have as much desire to communicate with people from many countries as we do now”. This teacher, therefore, was of the opinion that one condition for anything that was learnt to make a large impact was that it was applied at the right time. This demonstrates how teachers’ personal experience, which was derived
from deep-rooted social ideologies on the monolithic view of English (Jenkins, 2005), largely determines their beliefs. Therefore, the knowledge gained from teacher education appeared to play a secondary role.

5.3.2. Localised-trained teachers’ beliefs about the native/non-native dichotomy

The teachers attending localised TESOL programs showed great agreement toward equality between native and non-native English speaking teachers, disapproving of the perception that native English speakers were automatically better qualified professionals. This number is even slightly higher than that of teachers of overseas programs (76.5% vs. 74.9% agreement level). The interview data sheds light on their disengagement with the native-speakerist ideology, as well as demonstrates the role of teacher education courses.

Unlike the interviewees who attended overseas programs, even before training most (8 out of 10) of the interviewed teachers of localised programs had already held a very progressive attitude toward their non-nativeness. They did not have any major doubts about their legitimacy as non-native teachers. Instead of considering non-nativeness as an obstacle or challenge, they accepted it. Teacher B taught in an international school consisting of both native and non-native English teachers. The division of workload was that native teachers taught writing and speaking skills, and Vietnamese teachers were in charge of grammar and reading lessons. He agreed with this division as it optimised the strengths of both groups of teachers: “We both are doing what we do best to benefit our students’ learning, so I’ve never thought that being non-native is a problem” (Teacher B). This teacher also considered having regular contact with native English-speaking teachers in the teaching environment an advantage, as they could learn from and rely on each other for professional assistance. Teacher J, in a rather similar vein, admitted being aware of the societal overemphasis on having a native speaker teacher. However, this did not worry her, as she was confident that non-native teachers like herself would always play an important role in the learning process of local students.

“I think most Vietnamese English teachers not only teach English, but also incorporate English teaching with the culture and the environment in Vietnam. Also, since we share the first language with students, we have a better understanding of what often causes mistakes in their pronunciation or grammar usage. This helps us find more suitable solutions to their problems”. (Teacher J)

She then concluded that she was hardly threatened by native-speakerism.
Two teachers, however, were previously influenced by the viewpoint that they were at a disadvantage compared to native speakers when teaching English. First, it was due to the lack of confidence in their own English proficiency, especially their pronunciation and their sociolinguistic competence. Teacher D cast her mind back on her first years of teaching, and recalled that she often relied on audio recordings of native English speakers as she did not consider herself a good-enough language model for her students.

“One day in my Listening course our cassette player suddenly broke down. So instead of playing the recording, I had to play the role of the person in it. I felt sorry for my students as they had to listen to me instead of a native speaker’s voice”. (Teacher D)

Teacher I, on the other hand, was not very confident that she could convey to her students interaction norms embedded with cultural features in English. “All I’ve known about English-speaking cultures is mostly through books and magazines. So at the time I was afraid that my use of English is not always culturally appropriate”. It is reasonable to suggest that by “culturally appropriate”, this teacher predominantly referred to conversational behaviours that are acceptable in Anglophone cultures. Moreover, these teachers’ favourable attitudes toward native English-speaking teachers came from their own experience of learning with Vietnamese teachers who sometimes failed to provide a good model of language use for their students. According to Teacher I, some of her previous Vietnamese English teachers at school mispronounced quite a few English words, which later took her a long time to unlearn and self-correct. “I’m not saying this to criticise my teachers. What I mean is that as non-native speakers we have many disadvantages in terms of language competence compared to native colleagues”. This teacher added that as an English teacher she tried her best not to give students incorrect linguistic modelling, while acknowledging that she herself was also very liable to making mistakes. Such a high opinion of native speaker varieties of English appeared to have restricted the teachers’ view of the legitimacy of their local variety.

Due to these differing prior beliefs, an awareness of the dichotomy between native and non-native teachers gained during training affected the teachers’ thinking in different ways. First, five teachers who originally did not think being non-native was a disadvantage found their belief further strengthened. Indeed, Teacher J came to better embrace her non-native status as she knew she was supported by theories and research (see Llurda, 2005; Moussu & Llurda, 2008). Teacher A said that her optimism level
regarding the status of non-native teachers increased as she learnt of the movement toward greater equity for English teachers. Second, three teachers who used to have no strong opinion of this binary, claimed to give more thoughts to it as they were involved in course activities. These were teachers who were working in international schools and universities and had regular and direct professional contact with native speaker teachers. Previously they did not challenge the work division between themselves and their native colleagues, but learning about the dichotomy empowered them to think more critically about their status. Together with having their belief reinforced, they became more concerned about their role in the workplace in comparison with their native counterparts. Teacher B voiced his opinion:

“Involving in critical discussions on nativeness led me to think that it would be better if we were given the opportunity to teach productive skills such as speaking and writing too. We would be able to develop our skills fully”. (Teacher B)

Finally, the two teachers who formerly felt great disadvantages as non-native speaking teachers showed adjustments in beliefs after training, but they also had the strongest doubts among the participants. Teacher D admitted that she felt much more relieved after learning about the shift toward a more equal relationship for non-native professionals. Nonetheless, she found it hard to embrace this idea fully. From her observation, many schools and language centres in Vietnam considered native English speakers, with or without the teaching experience and certificate, to be superior to Vietnamese English teachers (cf. Doan, 2014). This teacher also called this a gap between theories learnt in teacher training and her teaching reality. More practically, Teacher I argued that learning to critically examine emerging issues in the teaching profession was helpful but not enough. She stressed that teacher learners like herself needed more powerful, practical assistance for their everyday teaching in aspects such as language proficiency, intercultural competence, and pedagogical grammar and pronunciation, in order to contest against the native/non-native dichotomy.

5.3.3. Localised-trained teachers’ beliefs about language teacher proficiency

Despite being in great agreement with each other regarding their stance toward native/non-native teachers, localised-trained teachers’ opinions varied when it comes to their preference of language proficiency in relation to native-likeness. Their responses were substantially aligned with those of teachers attending overseas programs. Only 29.4% of the 40 surveyed participants were against the viewpoint that English teachers should have native-like proficiency; 35.3% chose to be neutral; while 35.3% were
supportive of native-like proficiency. The interview data revealed a dilemma whereby some teachers desired to be native-like due to societal and personal pressures.

Socially speaking, the teachers were faced with social ideologies forced upon them, that an English teacher’s competence is best judged by whether or not s/he can reach the native speaker proficiency level (Jenkins, 2005). Teacher F considered himself to be constantly influenced by the idea of native-like proficiency, especially with his oral competence. Teaching at an international school, he admitted that he had to be extra careful when teaching his students, most of whom learnt English from an early age with native speaker teachers. Thus, even though their grammar and writing might be less proficient, their pronunciation was almost native-like. This put more pressure on him, as he did not want to appear incompetent to his students.

The participants teaching at public universities did not undergo such an intimidating experience, but they could not escape the fact that the public gave more credit to those with native-like English proficiency, especially in terms of accent and pronunciation. Teacher C gave an example,

“It’s quite common in Vietnam that we read and hear news such as somewhere in the country some high school students speak English like a native speaker. They are noticed, first and foremost, because of their native-like use of English. No one praises a student who speaks fluent English but his speech is Vietnamese-accented. Many people would probably say, ‘His English is still influenced by Vietnamese’, or ‘He writes English in a Vietnamese style’”. (Teacher C)

Likewise, Teacher G acknowledged that the native-speakerist ideology was so deep-rooted in the general public’s perception, and referred to other Asian countries as going in the same direction: “We’re not the only one. Japan too! I think they’re even a bigger fan of native-likeness than us, as I learnt that they have a huge program that attracts native English speakers to come to Japan to teach English”. This teacher also expressed her reluctance toward the possibility of change, claiming that she was only “a small grain of sand in the sea”. In her opinion, as long as the national English textbooks still favoured native English varieties and cultures, changes were unlikely. Teacher D shared a similar view:

“I knew that there are new progressive ways of thinking about the proficiency of English teachers nowadays, and I find it helpful. But it doesn’t mean I can pull away from traditional thinking and run toward it. It may happen one day but we need a huge push, especially at the level of policy making”. (Teacher D)
Additionally, the teachers’ beliefs were heavily affected by their own preference toward a native-like command of English. Teacher F, who previously practiced toward adopting an American accent, said he no longer purposefully tried to do it, especially after attending teacher education courses. However, inside his ‘teacher self’ the desire to advance her language proficiency so that it would become more native-like was still strong. He talked about his admiration for a young teacher he came to know through YouTube. This teacher had learnt English in Vietnam all her life and had never studied in an English-speaking country, but could use the language naturally and accurately, as if she was a near native speaker. “I didn’t feel intimidated by that teacher, but after watching her video tutorials I secretly wished I would be able to achieve a similar level of competence”, Teacher F added. Teacher A had a similar thought about orienting her language development to reach the native-like goal. To this teacher, better language proficiency was partly synonymous with professional development. As such, in order to measure her proficiency enhancement, she found it helpful to look toward the native speaker criteria.

When asked to tease out the role of the teacher education programs in shaping or influencing their beliefs in this matter, the teachers were again divided. They claimed that the biggest impact was probably in their more relaxed attitude toward their own English proficiency, even though they were not able to completely disengage with native-speaker norms. Knowing from courses in second language acquisition that a native-like command was almost impossible to attain for adult language learners, and informed by the paradigm shift to a plurilingualistic approach to English, they became more flexible and tolerant of their own English abilities. What is more, the localised teacher education programs, as they recalled, did not place any pressure on them in terms of their language proficiency. They did not have any difficulty in following course contents or completing assignments due to their language levels.

What the teachers found perplexing was whether they could do anything to alter their students and the public’s opinion of teacher proficiency. In their opinions, all the rights and equity discussions about the profession had been conducted mainly within the context of the teacher education program and among teachers and researchers. Outside the classroom walls an appreciation of non-Inner-Circle varieties of English was not widely known. This hindered the teachers from breaking away from traditional thinking and following the new schools of thought, despite the extent to which they might identify with it. This professional tension, as can be recalled, has also been found with teachers
who were studying in overseas programs. Such a contradiction in beliefs appeared to have
influenced the way they perceived themselves as legitimate teaching practitioners, and
thus calls into question the role of teacher education in empowering teachers to contest
ideological and societal prejudices when it comes to judgments of teachers’ English
language proficiency. Detailed discussion of this point will be provided later in the
discussion section.

5.3.4. Localised-trained teachers’ beliefs about approaching culture in TEIL
Regarding culture teaching in an English language classroom, the teachers were inquired
about the kind of cultural knowledge they tended to convey to their students. The survey
data revealed that 82.3% of the localised-trained teachers were in favour of incorporating
content of both English-speaking and non-English-speaking cultures into their teaching.
The rest stayed neutral. The interviews provided clarification of the teachers’ quantitative
responses, and also uncovered factors that shaped their beliefs about culture teaching.

Prior to training, like the teachers attending overseas programs, all the interviewed
teachers of localised programs claimed to focus on examining artefacts, information, and
behaviour of the target culture, especially American and British culture, in their teaching
of English. The reason for focusing on the US and Britain was embedded in long-held
traditional teaching practices. As Inner-Circle English varieties took the primary status,
it followed naturally that their cultures became the major source of cultural input for
students. Teacher A and F recalled that during their time as learners of English as well as
later in their pre-service training they were often introduced to the cultural content of the
US and UK. This led them to believe that learners needed only this kind of cultural input
to become competent English users. Similarly, Teachers B and D criticised the national
English textbook series for overemphasising content about Anglophone cultures.
Although they felt that some of this cultural content might serve to motivate students to
learn the target language (in order to know about the cultures it represents), they believed
that an overemphasis on this limited both teachers and students’ perceptions of English
communication and did not fit with the current situation of English as an international
language used among people from various cultures. Interestingly, they both pointed out
that this was, either deliberately or unintentionally, demonstrated right from the first point
of students’ contact with English:

“All the versions of the textbooks I learned English with had as their front covers
a picture of the Big Ben and Buckingham Palace overlooking the Thames, so for
years we had thought those were the kind of cultural knowledge we should learn”.
(Teacher B)

All of the teachers partly associated their expanded view toward cultural instruction with culture-related discussions in their TESOL courses. According to Teacher A, when she started to appreciate non-native varieties of English, he also developed an interest in understanding their cultures. This teacher believed that the way certain people use English as a tool of communication reflects characteristics of their cultures in meaningful ways. She gave an interesting example of the inclusion of the word ‘motorbike taxi’ in Vietnamese English: “English doesn’t have this word, but because in Vietnam it is a very popular means of transportation, I think even native English speakers start using the word too when they come to our country. I find it interesting that our culture has added new vocabulary to English” (Teacher A). For Teachers D, H, J, knowing about the possibility of including diverse cultural content in English teaching led them to think that this could potentially strengthen equality between teachers in the profession, regardless of their native/ non-nativeness. Teacher D recounted an incident in which she found it challenging to explain the American cultural practice of ‘holding a baby shower’ to her students as they encountered the term in a textbook activity, since he himself had very little idea nor experience of it. A more inclusive view of what culture to include in English teaching, according to these teachers, put all teachers back to the same starting line, as no one would have an advantage over the others. Teachers C, F, and G even went beyond discussing what to include in culture teaching, and showed their support for an emphasis on enhancing students’ intercultural competence in teaching EIL. Teacher C remarked that she used to think of cultural content as a kind of additional activity to enliven a language lesson, but what she learnt in the teacher education program broadened her view and helped her realise that the teaching of culture in EIL was not just about providing students with cultural information, but also to develop their skills to communicate with people from other cultures in general. Teacher G came to the conclusion that “I absolutely agree that it’s not only what and whose culture we should teach that is important, but also how we teach it”.

Along with expressing their thinking and beliefs about teaching culture in EIL, the teachers also spelled out the extent to which these changing beliefs had impacted on their instructional practice. Four teachers claimed to have tried to introduce cultures of Outer and Expanding Circle countries in their teaching, often alongside the introduction of their varieties of English. These activities, however, were not a regular part of their
lessons, as they took more time to design and implement. These teachers were also constrained by limited class time and the large amount of curriculum content they needed to deliver. Six other teachers straightforwardly stated that much of the cultural content they were teaching their students was still very Anglo-centric. Even though they believed in the benefit of exposing their students to a wider diversity of cultural content, they were not ready to invest their time and effort to teach differently. Two of them specified that one of the reasons they were hesitant to depart from their normal practice was a lack of pedagogical guidance. Teacher E explained,

“I feel identified with the idea of intercultural teaching, but am still not very sure how to start doing it. The courses gave me the opportunity to think critically about the issue, but I think I need more pedagogical guidance to be able to implement it”. (Teacher E)

When asked specifically what kind of pedagogical guidance they wanted, these teachers listed some examples such as reference books that have classroom tasks or activities related to culture teaching in EIL that they can easily adapt, or practical advice from teachers in other places who have attempted to do the same practice.

5.3.5. Localised-trained teachers’ beliefs about teaching methods

As can be seen from the comparable figure below, teachers of localised programs showed a higher level of assertiveness and therefore a lower degree of uncertainty when choosing ELT methods in relation to Western teaching philosophy than those attending overseas programs. 64.7% disapproved of closely following Western teaching methodology, compared with 43.5% for teachers of the other type of program. This showed that this group of teaching professionals were quite resistant to an overreliance on Western teaching methods.

![Bar chart comparing localised and overseas programs' beliefs about teaching methods]

- Localised programs: 64.7% Agree, 17.6% Neutral, 17.6% Disagree
- Overseas programs: 43.5% Agree, 39.1% Neutral, 17.4% Disagree
As the interview data revealed, a majority of the teachers supported the idea of “no best teaching method” and context-based teaching. Teacher D clarified, “I know that there is no best method in teaching. A good teacher needs to balance their students’ levels, their working conditions, their experience and many other things to choose good methods for each student, each class, and each level”. This view of deciding suitable teaching methods based on teaching contexts and conditions was shared widely by other participants:

“I know that most of what we learnt about ELT originated from the West and I highly appreciate the values transmitted. But after all it is our responsibility to adapt Western theories and methods to our own use to serve our benefits. The locals are strong” (Teacher B).

Teacher C even said explicitly that she did not think local teachers needed to be too worried about becoming dependent on the Westerners from whom they derived much of their knowledge:

“Why not consider ELT methods like a tool? – like the Internet to the world. We’re using the Internet across the world and it generated from the West, but using it does not make us any less Asian. The analogy might be a little bit simplistic but I just wanted to express what I feel about applying Western theories of teaching to our local context”. (Teacher C)

Remarkably, teachers attributed these liberal views toward teaching methods to the Master’s level teacher education courses. Specifically, according to Teacher D, the opportunity to read about and discuss ELT methods were eye-opening to her. Previously she was very much bound to rigid principles of Communicative language teaching (CLT) introduced to her during pre-service training, and found it disappointing whenever she could not teach “communicatively”:

“I used to think that teaching is communicative only when my students can use English in order to complete an authentic task. I even felt bad when teaching grammar structures explicitly to my students. Even though I knew it was necessary, I was not happy because it was not communicative”. (Teacher D)

However, upon learning about the strong and weak versions of CLT and reading about how teachers in various parts of the world adapted CLT to suit their own teaching contexts, Teacher D said she felt relieved and also became more confident about her
teaching. Teacher G, conversely, realised through training that her teaching was not as communicative as it could be. Unlike Teacher D, this teacher was confident that the techniques she had been using in teaching language skills to her students were very communicative, until she came to learn more about task-based language teaching (TBLT).

“I was intrigued by the use of tasks and how scholars in our field defined and categorised them. After that methods course I realised most of the tasks I had been designing were more pedagogical than real. So I have tried to include more real-world tasks in my teaching”.

It could therefore be concluded that while acknowledging the role of Western-origin teaching methodologies such as CLT and TBLT, the teachers of localised programs also took a flexible approach toward selecting their teaching methods.

5.3.6. Localised-trained teachers’ beliefs about teaching context
With regard to the importance of understanding characteristics of the sociocultural context of teaching English such as language education policies and the politics of TESOL education, teachers of localised programs showed complete agreement (100%) (see Figure 5.2). Their interview accounts revealed that this understanding was demonstrated in two aspects: their awareness of their students’ varying learning needs, and appreciation as well as caution toward the impact of contemporary sociocultural conditions on their teaching.

All of the participants were aware of the importance of considering contextualised needs of learners in conducting their teaching. They shared the same thought that they often took into consideration their learners’ prospective use of English in designing learning tasks and activities, as well as in giving course assignments. Despite having to follow a certain syllabus and textbook, they still managed to implement their own activities, believing that such need-oriented practice would motivate their students and thus produce better learning results. According to Teacher F who taught Business English to students majoring in Foreign Trade, he always found that his students engaged much better if the topic of discussion or the nature of a task was related to what they might encounter in authentic business communication. A high level of context awareness therefore helped him think of better teaching activities, which in turn better enhanced his teaching effectiveness, compared with when he used traditional learning tasks.
This consideration of context was also evident in the teachers’ awareness of larger social, cultural, and political conditions influencing their teaching and their students’ learning. The four teachers who were teaching at public universities indicated a large amount of concern. Despite being confident about the status of English as a highly favourable subject in the national education system, they were aware that their teaching was under the great influence of the national language policy. At the time of the interview, Teacher E still had not seen much appropriateness in the implementation of the new National Foreign Language Project. What she saw clearly, however, was that it had destabilised many aspects of English education, resulting in changed textbooks, shifted assessment criteria, and almost unfailingly, adjusted teaching methods. These changes, according to Teacher E, did not always entail positive outcomes, in spite of their good intentions. The three teachers teaching at international schools and working mostly with adolescents, likewise, were also assertive about the role of sociocultural contexts of teaching, though at a slightly different level. Specifically, as their teaching curriculum was not under direct supervision of the Ministry of Education, these teachers were more confined by institutional requirements and standards as well as expectations from students and their parents, which they claimed were very demanding. According to Teacher B, he had to go through many stages of assessment before reaching his current level of teachership; this practice therefore heightened his awareness of contextual characteristics in teaching:

“It is not a permanent position as what other teachers at public schools normally have after a few years of teaching. Evaluations of my teaching depend a lot on my students’ feedback and comments from the administrative staff after annual reviews. I have to try my best to improvise my teaching, so that it fits with the required standards”. (Teacher B)

Considering the training programs they attended, unlike teachers in overseas programs, teachers of localised programs did not emphasise the impact of teacher education on their understanding of teaching contexts. It appears that they had always considered such knowledge and consideration an inherent part of their teaching. The actual experience of being students in the training courses did contribute to reinforcing their belief in this matter, but it was not prominent. For instance, Teacher D recounted that in one of her MA courses, she was asked by the instructor to conduct an action research project investigating and implementing solutions to an aspect of teaching or learning English that posed challenges to herself and/or her students. This kind of
assignment was of great interest not only to Teacher D but also many other teachers in the course, from her observation. This is because it gave them the opportunity to work on pedagogical concerns arising from the teaching context, and at the same time receive credits that counted toward their study. Examples related to the role of teacher training in enhancing teacher beliefs about the sociocultural context of teaching, however, were not abundant in the interview accounts.

In summary, the findings of this research answered the previously stated research questions regarding teacher beliefs about various aspects of TEIL and the impact of TESOL teacher education program on these beliefs. Specifically, they revealed that: 1) post-training, overseas- and localised-trained teachers had an increased awareness of the pluricentricity of English, the importance of teaching both Anglophone and non-Anglophone cultures, and understanding the larger social, cultural, and political context of teaching; 2) teacher education programs played a significant role in modifying teacher beliefs, such as strengthening, disproving, and reconstructing existing beliefs, or shaping new beliefs. It also uncovered aspects of TEIL that teacher education could exert more impact, such as the construct of language teacher proficiency, and the risk of over-relying on Western teaching methodologies.

5.4. Discussion

The following section of the chapter will discuss these above-described findings based on theories and research on language teacher cognition and EIL teacher education. Findings from the two groups of teachers will be discussed together where their viewpoints converged, and where they differed I will present them as two separate groups.

5.4.1. English varieties: Toward a pluricentric view

Before training, the beliefs toward different varieties of English that all participants held resonated strongly with those of teachers in other contexts, especially Asian teachers of English. Previously, the participants considered Inner-Circle varieties more privileged than the Englishes spoken in the Outer and Expanding Circles, a finding replicated in the relatively large body of research examining teacher attitudes toward English varieties (e.g., Jenkins, 2005, 2007; Matsuda & Friedrich, 2011; Timmis, 2002; Tsui & Bunton, 2000). The teachers of the present study worked predominantly with materials that promoted either British or American English, and held these varieties as models of the target language for their students (cf. Shim, 1994, 2002; Ton & Pham, 2010). The reason
for this lack of awareness of the pluricentricity of English, as shown in the teachers’ accounts, results from the once-dominant language ideologies that favour Inner-Circle Englishes (Jenkins, 2007). Another interesting finding is that in their perceptions of English varieties, the teachers attached great importance to spoken aspects of English use, including pronunciation and accent (cf. Walkinshaw & Duong, 2012). Indeed, like many English teaching practitioners in norm-dependent Expanding Circle contexts, teachers of this research were under the perpetual influence of Anglo-centric teaching and learning materials (Holliday, 1994; Kirkpatrick, 2002; Phillipson, 1992), and therefore found it difficult to think and teach differently.

In addition, the growing popularity of international standardised tests such as TOEFL and IELTS, which are based on the native-speaker presumption and feature Inner-Circle varieties, appeared to have reinforced a monolithic approach to English. This was also found in Ahn’s (2014) study with Korean teachers of English who claimed to teach American English to familiarise students with test materials. While such findings are not new, they add further empirical evidence to the lack of awareness of English varieties among practising English teachers. In fact, Teacher 6 touched on this issue, observing that much of the training she had had in her pre-service teacher education centred on providing teaching knowledge and skills but failed to keep her updated about emerging critical issues in the field. As such, it could happen that at the undergraduate level, these teachers were too immersed in a traditional EFL perspective to be able to take into consideration the changing status and function of English. This argument will be revisited later in the thesis as implications of the research are discussed.

In a more important vein, this research highlighted how the teacher participants came to adopt greater understanding and appreciation of different English varieties. Interestingly, teachers of localised programs showed a higher level of agreement about developing an awareness of both native and non-native varieties of English than those of overseas programs (100% vs 89.1%), despite not having extensive study-abroad experience, and thus less contact with various varieties of English. This is different from Llurda’s (2009) finding that longer stays in English-speaking countries gave non-native teachers a more open view on issues such as native-speakeriness as the overseas experience was likely to expose them to many different types of English. The reasons for the teachers’ adjusted beliefs about English varieties will be presented in detail below.

The interview data show that teachers’ changed attitudes toward English varieties were due to two main factors: teacher education and shifting social ideologies. As for the
former, a majority of the teachers of both types of training programs acknowledged the
effect of teacher education on increasing their awareness of different English varieties. Particularly, these sources of change came from exposure to learning content and materials on EIL, including course readings, class discussions, and research reports. These findings confirm that the TESOL programs were able to fulfil their claim of providing their participants with updated views of English as a global language, as initially projected in their program introductions (see Chapter 4). Additionally, for teachers attending overseas programs, another influential factor related to teacher education was the multilingual learning environment where they were able to interact with classmates from other countries who spoke different varieties of English. These professional interactions provided them with authentic access to various Englishes; they thus became more accepting of non-Inner-Circle varieties of English.

Shifting social conditions which entail ideological transformation were also recorded as fuelling belief change, as seen to emerge from the accounts of localised-trained teachers. Particularly, these shifting ideologies resulted from changes in the social context where the teachers lived and taught. More specifically, extended economic and diplomatic relations between Vietnam and other countries, many of whom speak non-native varieties of English, have prompted the need for Vietnamese users of English to learn about these varieties. This awareness of changing social contexts, in turn, strengthened what localised-trained teachers had learnt in TESOL courses. It could also likely be the reason why they were able to fully embrace the idea of appreciating different English varieties. The finding again highlights the strong influence of deep-rooted social ideologies on general viewpoints toward aspects of English teaching, further reflecting that “whereas all varieties of English are linguistically equal, they are not considered to be socially equal” (McKay, 2002, p. 55). At the same time, it points to the necessity of extending the discussion on English varieties outside the arenas of teaching and research so that the idea becomes more widely received by the general public (Ahn, 2014; Matsuda, 2002; Sharifian, 2009). Once this happens, English teachers will be more ready to accept the pluricentric nature of the English language and translate it into their teaching.

Quite importantly, these changes in the teachers’ thinking and beliefs were mirrored in initial changes in their teaching practice. Unlike teachers in some previous studies (e.g., Ahn, 2014; Ton & Pham, 2010) who, despite claiming to be aware of the pluricentricity of English, were not ready to teach non-native English varieties, some
participants in this research reported to have made an effort to incorporate this content into their teaching. They were able to either point out to their students the importance of learning different English varieties (Teacher F), or use listening and reading materials that featured Englishes of both the Outer and Inner Circles (Teachers 4 and Teacher 10). Even though none of the teaching programs they worked in were designed according to an EIL perspective per se, one could argue that these initial introductory classroom activities should be acknowledged and commended as they demonstrated teachers’ efforts to bring to students’ attention the linguistic complexity of English as an international language (Matsuda, 2012). Unlike Ton and Pham (2010) who suggested that Vietnamese teachers should continue to teach Inner-Circle Englishes and leave the introduction of other varieties as part of out-of-class activities, the present research shows that students can be instructed toward becoming aware of non-Inner-Circle varieties of English during formal class hours, in addition to the commonly taught ones.

On the other hand, this research still finds teacher reluctance toward the viability of non-Inner-Circle Englishes. Indeed, in both program types there were a number of participants who, despite an awareness of the pluricentricity of English, still did not find this idea practical enough for them to readily uphold. Their scepticism could be traced back to three main causes. First, it was their actual teaching experience in which they had to teach either British or American varieties of English with little reference to other less dominant varieties, as in the case of Teachers 6 and 10 (Kirkpatrick, 2007; Matsuda, 2002; Tokumoto & Shibata, 2011). Second, the strong favour for teachers who speak Inner-Circle Englishes in terms of job recruitment in the English teaching profession (Braine, 1999, 2010) made them question the essentiality of giving space to other Englishes in the curriculum (e.g., Teacher 9). The third factor was, again, the prevalence of learning materials promoting Inner-Circle Englishes and the serious lack of teaching and learning resources that provide a more diverse approach to English varieties (Matsuda, 2012; McKay, 2012). Noticeably, the teacher education programs did not appear to exert much influence on the teachers’ beliefs about these matters.

In short, the findings of this research show positive progression in teacher beliefs about different varieties of English. This is in line with one of the main principles of teaching EIL, that English teachers should have an adequate understanding and appreciation of different varieties of English used by a diversified international population (Canagarajah, 2006, 2014; Hamid, Zhu, & Baldauf, 2014; Kirkpatrick, 2007, 2014a; McKay, 2002). This finding is also concurrent with that of more recent research
on teacher attitudes toward the pluricentric feature of English, that EIL teachers were increasingly adopting a more open view toward English varieties (see Ahn, 2014; Ton & Pham, 2010; Shim, 2002). Teacher education has made substantial contribution to this achievement by engaging course participants in discussions about the linguistic diversity of English. Nevertheless, cynicism and uncertainty remain, as not all teachers were able to challenge or go beyond out-dated yet still dominant social ideologies regarding English language teaching, and arguably not enough pedagogical empowerment had been given to them. This suggests important implications for teacher education, which will be presented in Chapter 8 of the thesis.

5.4.2. Is the native speaker an ideal teacher?
Before MA training, the teachers attending overseas and localised programs held contrasting views toward the dichotomy between native and non-native speaker teachers. The majority of those attending overseas programs and a small number of teachers of localised programs found themselves less confident in comparison with native speaker teachers, especially regarding their language proficiency and target culture competence. This result was corroborated by many studies investigating non-native English speaking teachers’ self-perception (Butler, 2007; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Llurda & Huguet, 2003; Ma & Ping, 2012; Norton & Tang, 1997). Similar to that revealed in the abovementioned studies, this belief was mainly due to the teachers’ low self-assessment of their English proficiency and their knowledge of the target culture. Another reason was the lack of public confidence in the language proficiency of non-native English teachers, causing them to adopt a low opinion of themselves (Dogancay-Aktuna, 2006). In addition, one factor arising from this research, which has not been documented in previous studies, was the teachers’ previous learning experience with non-native teachers who sometimes failed to provide what they called a ‘good model’ of English usage to their learners, which in their mind then was close the native-speaker standards (see Cook, 1999; Davies, 2003, 2008). Although the teachers did not consider this to be negative and showed empathy toward their previous English teachers, they appeared to be influenced by the experience. These thought processes reflect their prior reliance on the long-held native speaker model (Holliday, 2005).

A majority of the interviewed teachers of localised programs, on the other hand, adopted a positive attitude toward their non-nativeness even before teacher education. They seemed to focus more on the advantages of being non-native, such as that they
shared the students’ first language and culture and had been through the process of 
learning English themselves (Kamhi-Stein, Aagard, Ching, Paik, & Sasser, 2004; Ma & 
Ping, 2012; Phan, 2007). This high level of confidence, as the interview data unveiled, 
resulted partly from the teachers’ own mindset. They realised that despite a certain level 
of societal preference for native speaker English teachers, non-native teachers like 
themselves would still remain the key force of English teaching in an Expanding Circle 
context such as Vietnam (Braine, 1999, 2010; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Moussu & Llurda, 
2008). Also, the fact that some teachers of localised programs had had fruitful 
professional interactions with native speaker teachers in their workplaces might have 
contributed to their flexible view toward the dichotomy between native and non-native teachers. This particular finding contradicts Llurda’s (2009) conclusion that non-native teachers who had little or no experience in English-speaking countries were more likely to engage with the idea of the native speaker being the ideal teacher. This difference was possibly because, even though the localised-trained teachers participating in this research had little Anglophone experience, they still had the opportunity to come into contact with native speaker colleagues as a result of their teaching environments (i.e., international schools of English language centres). Such an experience could have enabled them to adopt a realistic opinion of the competence of native English teachers, as what teachers who had the opportunity to study and live in English-speaking countries experienced. Meanwhile, for other teachers it was the absence, or scarce presence, of the native speaker teacher in their working environment that led them to take little consideration of the native/non-native dichotomy and see more of their worth as non-native English teachers (e.g., Teacher J).

This set of findings lends support to Llurda’s (2012) claim that non-native English teachers have different perceptions toward their strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, it shows that these differences were due to both social factors (e.g., lack of public appreciation) and personal attributes (e.g., learning experience and personal mindset).

With regard to the TESOL programs, post-training, teacher education exerted largely positive impacts on the beliefs about the dichotomy between native and non-native teachers of teachers attending two types of programs. Those attending overseas programs shifted toward seeing positivity in being non-native due to two factors. First was the exposure to course contents that promoted the EIL perspective in which multilingualism instead of native-speakerism is the norm (Canagarajah, 2014, 2015; Kirkpatrick, 2010, 2012, 2014a). They started to see beyond the nativeness divide and think more positively
about being non-native professionals, knowing they were supported by research in the field (Park, 2012; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999). Second, their experience in living and studying in an Anglophone environment provided them with professional contact with native speaker teachers by means of coursework collaboration, enabling them to see more clearly the strengths and weaknesses of these teachers. This first-hand experience is undoubtedly an asset that overseas teacher education programs enrolled by both native and non-native teachers can take advantage of to help their participants engage better with the move away from the native/non-native dichotomy.

As for teachers of localised programs who already previously felt optimistic about their non-nativeness, teacher education was seen to add useful warrant to their existing beliefs. Not only were they able to strengthen their self-confidence, they now had a good grasp of scientific knowledge that they could rely on to support their view. This is one of the main kinds of impact on teacher learners that teacher education aims to tap into (Richardson, 1996), that is, to help teachers to build or modify their beliefs based on sound evidence supported by theory and research. Not only that, this increased knowledge led some of the teachers to challenge their teaching realities and demand more professional equality regarding work division between themselves and native speaker colleagues, as in the case of Teacher B and D. In this aspect, teacher education has arguably succeeded in raising teachers’ awareness of power relations in their professional community, empowering them to become critical practitioners (Hawkins & Norton, 2009). Such an impact is indisputably worthy of promoting in the field of TESOL, where much still needs to be done to “locate and confront issues of power, privilege, and hegemony” (Rogers et al., p. 368).

The rest of the teachers from both program types who still had doubts about the professional equity between native and non-native teachers demonstrated a strong inertia toward the prospect of change. Their disbelief was derived from the exonormative native speaker model that has been widely adopted in Vietnam and perhaps many other Expanding Circle contexts (see Kirkpatrick, 2006). Another crucial factor was that they did not feel competent enough to thrive alongside competent native speaker teachers. Teacher I’s comment that non-native teachers like herself needed more support in areas of language proficiency and intercultural competence, speaks to the need for TESOL teacher education programs to cater better to these aspects during training. This language-related concern paves the way for discussion of another important aspect of non-native teachers’ teaching beliefs, which is teacher language proficiency.
5.4.3. Teacher language proficiency: resistance toward resisting the native speaker model

While engaging quite strongly with the idea of native and non-native English teachers being equally competent professionals, teachers graduating from both program types showed a high level of neutrality as to whether nativelike competency should be required of English teachers. After training, they still appeared to identify with the native speaker model in terms of language proficiency. Specifically, the teachers’ beliefs about the necessity of native-likeness was dominated by the great importance attached to oral proficiency, particularly their pronunciation. For example, Teacher F admired a younger teacher whose spoken English was almost native-like and wanted to attain the same level of competence. Likewise, Teacher 1 and 9 still turned toward the native-speaker standard when judging their own proficiency. Such thinking aligns with non-native participants in Jenkins’ (2005) study, one of whom claimed that "I should support EIL view as a teacher, but as a person maybe I’m aiming at native-like” (p. 540). Also, these findings were in agreement with previous research investigating non-native teachers’ perception of their own linguistic competence (see Butler, 2007; Jenkins, 2005, 2007; Park, 2012; Pavlenko, 2003; Wang, 2012), that pronunciation is “the crux of the issue” (Walkinshaw & Duong, 2012, p.11) as it is an area where many L2 English teachers feel they cannot compete with L1 English speakers who apparently have an innate linguistic advantage.

The reasons for this resistance to resisting the native speaker model, as could be drawn from findings of this research, were both society- and self-generated. Both groups of teachers were heavily influenced by social ideologies that place greater emphasis on native-likeness, to an extent that they allowed themselves to believe in them without much justification. Broyard (as cited in Thomas, 1999) stated, “one of the dangers of stereotypes is that they can make those who are pigeonholed believe in these depictions and unconsciously try to maintain them” (p. 10). In subscribing to the stereotype of non-nativeness being inferior, the teachers of the present study made a generalisation that many students and their parents would prefer an English teacher with native-like proficiency. This belief is, in fact, not properly warranted. A number of studies that explored students’ perceptions of English teachers’ nativeness reported positive findings that learners, especially those of Expanding Circle countries, had a high opinion of their non-native teachers and saw them as good role models for their language learning (Bayyurt, 2006; Butler, 2007; Duff & Uchida, 1997; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999).
Additionally, nativeness was rated by students as less important in forming their judgments of English teachers than other criteria such as teaching experience, good qualifications, interesting classes, friendly personality, and understanding of students’ culture (Walkinshaw & Duong, 2012).

At the same time, the teachers’ beliefs and attitudes were driven by their own desire to better their language proficiency for the purpose of enhancing their professional expertise, which has both positive and negative influences. Like teachers in Borg’s (2006) study who were surveyed on the “distinctive characteristics of foreign language teacher” (p. 3), the teachers of the present study explicitly considered their language proficiency as one of the key features characterising their teaching and teacher identity (Pennington & Richards, 2015). They thus constantly desired to improve their own language proficiency, which is undoubtedly a positive mentality toward professional development for language teachers (Borg, 2006; Farrell & Richards, 2007). Nevertheless, in this process of self-improvement they seemed to have fallen back into the “trap” of the native-speaker fallacy (Phillipson, 1992) that they previously wanted to escape from. They were still predominantly concerned about non-native features of their spoken English, especially their pronunciation and accentedness. This viewpoint is arguably counterproductive for two main reasons outlined in turn below.

First, it demonstrates an oversimplified view of the construct of teacher language proficiency. Specifically, it overlooks an important fact that language teachers’ proficiency demands more than just general or academic proficiency (Elder & Kim, 2013), and that the distinct classroom discourse makes teachers’ use of the target language different from other contexts of language use. Specifically, Freeman, Katz, Gomez, and Burns (2015) identify these differences and make further contribution by proposing a reconceptualisation of the notion of language teachers’ proficiency. This set of proficiency benchmarks goes beyond criteria for assessing general English proficiency to include the teacher’s ability to use English to conduct lessons, such as managing the classroom, understanding and delivering lesson content, and assessing students and giving feedback. From this standpoint, it could be interpreted that both native and non-native speaker teachers require a similar level and amount of training and practice in order to become proficient in the classroom language. The likelihood of the native-speaker factor interfering with teachers’ perception of their own language proficiency is therefore minimised.
Second, the teachers’ preoccupation with features of their spoken English can be argued to have overshadowed the importance that should be attached to written English, an area where they are likely to be on a par with native-speaker teachers. Kirkpatrick (2014b), in proposing a model for a lingua franca approach to ELT, stresses the difference between spoken and written English, arguing that there is no such notion as a native speaker of written English because writing is a skill that has to be learnt by all. Moreover, the variation of writing structures and styles across different genres, disciplines, and cultures means that standard written norms are not dictated by native speakers, but by tradition and convention (Kirkpatrick, 2014b). This further points out that both native and non-native speakers of English need training and learning effort to become proficient writers. In fact, Teacher 9 (of the overseas programs group) was able to realise this as he questioned the myth that all native English speakers were good writers, based on his experience in a US TESOL program where his lecturers required non-native speaker participants to proofread their written assignments carefully before submission. This helpful and potentially empowering realisation, nonetheless, was mainly generated from Teacher 9’s own reaction to his learning reality. Teacher training, instead of forging a more equal professional environment, seemed to have reinforced the native/non-native divide. The TESOL classroom, in this case, can be said to reproduce the gap between the more privileged and the less privileged, a reality already commonly prevalent in larger social discourses (Luke, 2004).

For both of these arguments against a simplified view of language teachers’ proficiency, both types of teacher education programs attended by the participants of this research showed limitations. They either made little reference to language teacher proficiency, or failed to problematise it to broaden course participants’ perceptions of the concept. It is therefore not surprising that the teachers were not able to completely move away from the native speaker model when discussing their language proficiency, despite that a majority of them identified with other EIL views such as appreciation of English varieties and equality concerns for native and non-native teachers.

5.4.4. An all-encompassing view toward culture teaching in EIL

Regarding their approaches to culture teaching, overseas- and localised-trained teachers of the present study shared many similar opinions before and after teacher education. Previously their culture teaching was predominantly concerned with presenting Inner-Circle cultures. Interestingly, many teachers attributed this to the prevalence of target
culture content in the teaching materials they had studied and taught with, which had shaped their thinking and classroom practice. Many studies conducted in other Expanding Circle contexts such as China (Wu, 2010), Korea (Song, 2013), Taiwan (Su, 2016), and Asian countries generally (Shin, Eslami, & Chen, 2011), have found that both internationally and locally produced textbooks that were in use in these respective research contexts were dominated by Inner-Circle cultural content, with American and British cultures being most frequently represented. Although no research of this kind has been identified in the Vietnamese context, from the teachers’ accounts it appears that the situation could be very similar. ELT textbooks have been reported to play different roles, such as a primary teaching source, a supplement to instruction (see Richards, 2014) or sometimes even as a syllabus. Since Anglocentric culture was the dominant culture represented in their textbooks, it is not surprising that the participants were quite Anglophone-oriented in their culture teaching.

These traditional beliefs about culture teaching appeared to shift significantly as a result of teacher education. First, the teachers’ realisation of the need to include source culture and international culture content in teaching reflects their identification with the principle of teaching culture in EIL (MacKay, 2002; Kirkpatrick, 2007). Teachers in Bayyurt’s (2006) were also reported to support the use of elements of local and international cultures, but there was not unanimous agreement among them, as was found with participants of the present study. The difference might be due to the effect of training courses on teacher attitudes, as the beliefs of teachers in Bayyurt’s research were not investigated in relation to previous training. Second, some teachers of the present study claimed to go beyond conceptualising cultures as restricted to cultural contents about specific countries to emphasise the importance of developing students’ intercultural competence in teaching culture in EIL (Alptekin, 2002; Byram, 1997; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; McKay, 2002). This is arguably a significant change in belief, especially considering their prior monocentric approach to culture teaching. Third, teachers attending both program types claimed to have attempted to introduce international cultural content to their teaching after training. Even though it had yet to become a regular part of their teaching practice due to contextual constraints (i.e., time and resources), such an effort was in itself an important advancement compared to traditional teaching of Inner-Circle cultures.

The only difference in perceptions toward culture teaching of the two groups of teachers was due to the different learning environments. Teachers of overseas programs
were able to take advantage of their studying and living in a different cultural environment to strengthen their belief in the necessity of having knowledge of various cultures and developing intercultural competence. A similar result was also found in Erlam’s (2014) research with Malaysian pre-service teachers who underwent part of their training in New Zealand. Erlam’s participants found that the opportunity to interact and form relationships with New Zealanders and people from other cultures was one of their most significant learning experiences. Erlam’s study did not, however, specifically indicate how this experience impacted on teacher beliefs about culture teaching, as has been done in the present research. Nonetheless, such culturally enriching experiences were not found with teachers attending localised programs as they did not undergo their training in a foreign country. While this finding supports that of previous studies on the benefit of study abroad in terms of culture learning (see Byram & Feng, 2006; Kinginger, 2008), it does not denote that a lack of international experience might make teacher learning deficient. In fact, teachers of localised programs showed quite a similar level of cultural awareness compared to their overseas-trained colleagues.

5.4.5. A renewed view of CLT and the adoption of a post-method perspective
The attitudes toward teaching methods of teachers from both program types converged in two important aspects. First, they appeared to gain a refined understanding of CLT. In learning that the method was originally devised in an ESL setting with a focus on native-speaker proficiency, they were able to see the importance of taking caution when applying it into their teaching context. This led them to modify their beliefs about CLT and become more flexible in evaluating the level of communicativeness of their teaching practice (e.g., by referring to CLT as including both strong and weak versions). Previous research examining CLT implementation in various contexts (e.g., Li, 1998; Pham, 2004; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999) reported, among other findings, that teachers’ understanding of CLT was an important factor in determining the success of its application in the classroom. Specifically, some misconceptions - such as the idea of CLT being mainly designed to practice oral production and neglecting grammar instruction, appeared to have negatively influenced teaching practice. It was also found that this misunderstanding was often caused by a lack of training, or failure to utilise knowledge gained from teacher education. If this is the case, the relaxed attitude toward CLT that teachers of the present research possessed shows that teachers can overcome common obstacles toward successful execution of CLT, at least at the conceptual level. Quite expectedly, a majority of
participants associated their enhanced view of teaching methods to the training they received in their Master’s TESOL programs. In this respect, an emphasis on teaching methodology courses in the curricula of both overseas and localised programs proved effective.

Second, it was the teachers’ flexible view toward CLT that led them to identify with the post-method perspective, espoused by Kumaravadivelu (2003). The teachers’ emphasis on context-sensitive teaching that resulted from their diverse experience and learning in teacher training programs showed a shift away from a restricted view of methods. This aligns with what Kumaravadivelu (2003) proposes as one of the parameters of post-method pedagogy, namely a pedagogy of particularity. In this parameter, teachers make informed instructional decisions based on local knowledge, while keeping themselves aware of the principles and practices of “the colonial construct of method” (p. 544), with CLT being a well-known example. Interestingly, in the process of reconstructing their view of methods, the teachers demonstrated that they were not intimidated by the influence of Western teaching methods such as CLT. They believed in the ability of local teachers to use particular teaching methods in an appropriate way. A case in point is Teacher C’s suggestion of considering methods as a tool to facilitate teaching and learning, rather than adopting an apprehensive attitude toward them due to certain colonial philosophies underlining their invention. This approach could be deemed appropriate, as teachers can critically use methods as a guiding framework – a crucial pedagogical factor to assist them with their teaching. At the same time, they are aware of the range of flexibilities available to them.

While both groups of teachers generally showed resistance to relying on Western-based philosophy in terms of teaching methodology, it also emerged from the quantitative data that teachers of overseas programs showed a lower level of liberation (42.4% agreement level, compared with 64.7% for teachers trained in localised programs). The interview data corresponded to this at some level. Teachers attending localised programs seemed more outspoken about their identification with the post-method perspective than overseas teachers, as shown in their frequent use of strong language (e.g., “the locals are strong”, “we don’t have to worry”). Even though there is not enough evidence from the data to arrive at a definite explanation, it might be inferred that the overseas teachers’ direct and prolonged involvement in an Anglophone educational system and living environment could have made it harder for them to significantly disengage from Western teaching philosophies. Phillipson (1992), in discussing the “ELT aid” (p.11) provided to
Third World nations by countries of the Inner-Circle to promote English and related aspects (including teacher training and curriculum development), associated this kind of aid with a way to expand British influence. He pointed out that one of the British donor's goals was that when people learn English, they almost unfailingly acquire characteristics of British culture, institutions, and ways of thinking and communication. As such, it is not surprising that the teachers who underwent training in English-speaking countries had a certain level of attachment with Western values which might have hindered them from breaking away from Western teaching methods.

5.4.6. Consideration of context in teaching EIL

Having an awareness of more macro dimensions of ELT practices enables teachers to engage critically in the dynamics of teaching and learning and consider the ELT classroom not as given (Crookes, 1997), but a site in which they can exercise their role as a political agent. Accordingly, such knowledge can expand the basis of their instructional decisions beyond purely methodological concerns to include characteristics of the social, cultural, and political conditions influencing their teaching. In this aspect, teachers of overseas and localised programs showed a high level of context awareness. First and foremost, this is demonstrated in their self-reported understanding and appreciation of EIL concepts and issues such as consideration of English varieties, awareness of and engagement with the native/non-native divide, and critical evaluation of Anglo-dominated cultural materials and teaching methods, as has been previously discussed. Second, their enhanced sociocultural awareness was clearly reflected in their attitudes toward important language education policy. The study participants expressed their concern about the implementation of new national language education policies, particularly the National Foreign Language Project 2020. They were well aware of the impact that these policies had on their professional life as well as classroom teaching. In this regard, teacher education played an important part, as the training programs were reported to incorporate aspects of these macro issues in their courses, as evident from the teachers’ interview accounts. Garshick (as cited in Dogancay-Aktuna, 2006), in reviewing course requirements of MA TESOL programs in the US and Canada, concluded that there were not many courses devoted to examining the sociocultural and political context of TESOL. Findings from this research, however, might suggest that the situation has changed for the better, as in this case at least teacher education appeared to have imparted in course participants a certain amount of critical thinking about English
teaching, mainly by providing knowledge and encouraging critical discussion among course participants.

In addition, there were some differences in the specific ways in which the two program types impacted on teachers’ beliefs about the sociocultural context of teaching. Teachers of overseas programs took the opportunity to study in an Anglophone sociocultural and political context to reflect on their home teaching situation. This comparing and contrasting process enabled them to have a better awareness of their own context, and led them to question some principles of ELT practices conveyed in an Anglophone environment. This was demonstrated, for example, in some teachers’ realisations of the perpetuation of inequality in TESOL, as they experienced certain stereotypes that some course lecturers had with non-native English speaking students. From a neo-colonial perspective, the TESOL classroom in this case became a reproduction of unequal power, where the more powerful Self (TESOL lecturers) imposed their way of thinking on the less powerful Other (Pennycook, 2007). Teachers of localised programs, on the other hand, reported a contrasting example in which their lecturers from an Inner-Circle country displayed an adequate understanding of the local ELT context and provided them with a different and interesting way to look at local teaching issues. This decolonialising practice could arguably give localised programs an advantage, as it helps to create equitable pedagogical relations between teacher educators and teacher learners (Hawkins & Norton, 2009).

5.4.7. Impacts of training on teacher beliefs

In unearthing teacher beliefs on different aspects of TEIL as discussed in detail above, this research revealed various levels of impacts that teacher education had on these beliefs. Some beliefs were strengthened, some were disproved and reconstructed, some were formed anew, while others remained unchanged. As “it may be necessary for teacher education programs to challenge the apprenticeship of personal experience and identify what future teachers need to unlearn [emphasis added] as well as what they must learn” (Snow, 2011, p.6), identifying the different levels of impacts that professional learning has on teacher beliefs can help teacher educators to have a better idea of what should be unlearnt and what should be learnt when training EIL teachers. Specifically, TESOL teacher education can place more emphasis on beliefs that could benefit from more influence, and continue to stress areas that were well-received by teacher learners.
The first set of beliefs that was strengthened as a result of training was concerned with teaching methodologies, particularly the implementation of CLT. As all the participants were in-service teachers who had had various degrees of teaching experience before participating in further training, it is not surprising that they found in the courses numerous theories or principles underlying their everyday teaching practice, which inevitably led to the solidification of their beliefs. This finding echoes that of Richardson and Placier’s (2001) study on the cognitive development of in-service teachers, that actual teaching experience can act as a boost toward enhancing beliefs, together with training.

In other words, since in-service teachers have experienced the ins and outs of teaching, they have a clearer idea of what they want to achieve from teacher education, and are therefore more prepared to modify their beliefs. This result also resonates with previous research on the experience of English teachers in Inner-Circle-based TESOL programs (e.g., Pham, 2002, n.d; Le & Phan, 2012; Chowdhury & Phan, 2014). In this case, teachers’ prior teaching experience combines with teacher education to impact their beliefs. This alignment between teachers’ beliefs and practices and those promoted in teacher training, as pointed out by Borg (2011), is quite common among in-service teachers pursuing further training. While this is not considered by Borg’s (2006) participants as teacher training bringing about significant changes, in the current study such a level of impact was still crucial to the teacher participants. The fact that training courses added theoretical insights to participants’ practice was perceived as influential to those teachers’ beliefs.

Similarly, the teachers’ contact with progressive teaching principles in teacher training courses appeared to have increased their understanding of critical issues in EIL. These teachers reported that they had briefly questioned the native/non-native teachers division before, but it was not until being acquainted with research and practice in this area that they developed strong attitudes toward it. This is in agreement with Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999), who found that a critically-conducted postgraduate seminar on the native/non-native dichotomy helped to empower its participants to perceive themselves as legitimate TESOL professionals. As such, these outcomes confirm the role of teacher education in strengthening teachers’ existing beliefs.

Along with promoting existing beliefs, the present findings also suggest that teacher education can disprove teachers’ current understandings and thus reconstruct their practice. The teachers shifted from underestimating the value of different English varieties, even their own, to appreciating and paying more attention to them. Likewise,
they disengaged from the misperception that native speakers are the ideal English teachers, and adopted a more rational, equal view toward native and non-native teachers. These radical changes were mostly achieved through increased professional knowledge, or in the case of overseas teachers, were also due to their first-hand experience of living and studying in a multilingual environment. The profound impacts of teacher education, in this case, could be argued to be due to the dissonance between existing and new theories registered by the teachers (Davison, 2001). In their training courses the teachers were introduced to emerging issues in TESOL that they previously were not familiar with, such as views that supported their non-native speaker status. Therefore it is within expectation that they strongly engaged with these ideologies. This change in belief also led to reconstruction of practice, as demonstrated in Teacher 10’s introduction of non-Anglophone-oriented materials in her teaching, such as her use of a Singaporean newspaper article as authentic teaching material. It should be noted that this teacher previously focused excessively on teaching Anglophone culture, and undervalued non-native varieties of English. This exemplifies what Freeman (1993) terms “renaming experience, reconstructing practice” when referring to the impact of teacher education; at the same time, it emphasises the link between teacher beliefs and their practice, which will be discussed in detail in section 5.3.8 of this chapter.

Moreover, new beliefs were adopted, which is evident in the teachers’ renewed thinking about teaching culture and their deeper understandings of the role of context in teaching. The participants’ engagement with extending their beliefs about culture teaching to include contents of non-Anglophone cultures, and with the need to emphasise cross-cultural communication skills, resulted from both learning in the program and the context of the learning itself. In this regard, teacher education programs can be seen as not just providers of knowledge, but also as contexts for learning and belief change.

There were, however, certain beliefs that were hard to change. The teachers’ resistance to a more flexible view of English proficiency for themselves as non-native teachers was a telling example. Remarkably, some teachers claimed that their sustained belief in native speaker standards was reinforced by inequality in the practice of teacher training. This finding particularly reverberates with that of Chowdhury and Phan’s (2008), in which one participant straightforwardly indicated his disbelief toward Western TESOL programs genuinely improving the professional knowledge and skills of non-native English teachers, as “they [the West] are not going to talk about your [Eastern students’] real need if it does not benefit them” (p. 313). In a similar vein, many teachers
of the present study were sceptical about the possibility of non-native English teachers not being judged based on their English proficiency, and still retained this belief after training.

5.4.8. The interrelation between teacher beliefs, knowledge, and practice
Apart from foregrounding the different levels of impact that teacher education has on the teacher participants’ beliefs, this research also draws attention to the close relationship between teacher beliefs, their knowledge of teaching, and their practice. As apparent from the research findings, the factor that underlies many belief adjustments of the teachers was the knowledge and understandings they gained from teacher education courses. This ensures that teacher beliefs are not based on unwarranted truths, but on proven scientific theories, and are therefore more likely to be well-advanced. If the goal of teacher education, as Richardson (2003) puts forward, is to develop, modify, and transform teachers’ beliefs through contact with knowledge, the TESOL teacher education programs in this research have, to a certain extent, succeeded in achieving this objective.

Also, it is evident in the teachers’ experiences that their modifications of beliefs can lead to a reconstruction of teaching practice, as also found in Freeman’s (1993) study with in-service language teachers in a Master’s degree program. Teacher 5’s reduced emphasis on his students having native-like English proficiency, or Teacher 7’s careful analysis of context in teaching, were two among the many examples of changes in practice that resulted from belief adjustment. Successful implementation of these practices, in turn, enhances teachers’ beliefs in the corresponding areas. While these were, for the most part, reported teaching activities that were done by the teachers upon finishing training and returning to their teaching, it was interesting that most of the participants of the present study talked about their practices as examples to demonstrate adjustments in their beliefs. This speaks to the close-knit relationship between beliefs and practice in the teaching profession (Tillema, 2000; Woods, 1996).

5.5. Summary
This chapter reports on the beliefs about key aspects of TEIL held by Vietnamese TESOL teachers attending Master’s level training in overseas and localised programs. The main findings were that the teachers

- had an increased knowledge and acceptance of the pluricentricity of English; disengaged with the native/non-native divide;
had an increased awareness of the importance of teaching both Anglophone and non-Anglophone cultures;

- realised the importance of understanding the larger social, cultural, and political context of teaching.

Meanwhile, there were a range of opinions about whether English teachers should have native-like proficiency, and the possibility of not over-relying on Western teaching methodologies, with teachers attending overseas programs displaying a higher level of hesitation than teachers who were studying in localised programs. The study also found that the teacher education program played an important part in providing the teachers with professional knowledge and an environment in which they interacted with teacher educators and other colleagues. This experience appeared to impact on their beliefs on different levels depending on each aspect. In some cases, existing beliefs were strengthened, disproved, and reconstructed or not modified at all. In other cases new beliefs were created. Overall, discussion of teachers’ belief modification in relation to the training they received confirms the efficacy of teacher education and the key role played by the WE and EIL perspectives in this process, and reveals areas where TESOL teacher education programs can focus on to exert more influence.
Chapter 6
AUTONOMY IN TEACHING PRACTICE: HOW DOES TEACHER EDUCATION HAVE AN INFLUENCE?

“Teaching is only demonstrating that it is possible. Learning is making it possible for yourself.”

Paulo Coelho

6.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, the beliefs about aspects of teaching English as an international language of Vietnamese teachers who attended overseas and localised TESOL programs were presented and discussed in detail. Having documented the impacts of teacher training at the cognitive level, in this part of the thesis I will focus on reporting these teachers’ teaching practice in relation to the teacher education programs they attended.

Many aspects have been considered to characterise the teaching practice of TESOL teachers, ranging from the selection of teaching methods in a particular teaching situation, classroom interaction and management, curriculum development and implementation, assessment of learning, to the use of technology (Nunan & Lamb, 1996; Richards & Renandya, 2002). According to Nunan and Lamb (1996), an important factor that influences all these aspects of teaching practice, and which has not received adequate attention in the language education literature, is the “effective management of teaching and learning processes in second and foreign language classroom” (p.1). In referring to ‘management’, Nunan and Lamb focus on the construction of a positive pedagogical
environment which is conducive to learning. In other words, apart from key instructional issues such as curriculum planning and teaching methodology, they argue for more research attention to the professional decisions that teachers make to ensure effective learning. Teaching, in this sense, has a lot to do with decision-making, which represents the extent to which a teacher can take control of the teaching and learning processes in their classroom in order to become self-directed practitioners. Effective decision-making, in turn, will contribute toward effective teaching and better learning results. Therefore, examining teachers’ decision-making in the classroom and factors that influence their professional decisions will offer useful insights into their teaching practice.

In this research, teachers’ self-directedness in terms of their ability to make effective professional decisions will be examined using the concept of teacher autonomy. From a comprehensive perspective, teacher autonomy can be conceptualised as comprising two main elements, the professional freedom that is external from teachers themselves and dependent on their teaching surroundings (e.g., the educational system and the teaching environment), and the internal capacity that is built upon the teacher’s abilities to operate within constraints (see Benson, 2013; McGrath, 2000; Trebbi, 2008). The former refers to structural aspects of teaching, specifically how much independence and control the language teacher has concerning key aspects of classroom matters, such as lesson planning, student assessment, and teachers’ decision making. The latter can be understood as the extent to which teachers are able to deal with constraints in their teaching environment (Benson, 2006; McGrath, 2000; Pearson & Hall, 1993), and their ability to foster learner autonomy (Benson, 2011; Little, 1995, 2000; Martinez, 2008; Trebbi, 2008).

Among these factors, the teacher’s capacity to become autonomous presumably stands the greatest chance to be acted upon and thus enhanced, which in turn rests heavily on teacher education (Jiménez Raya & Vieira, 2015). Little (1995) was among the first scholars to argue for the crucial role of teacher education in promoting teacher autonomy, based on his firm belief that there is a close relationship between learner autonomy and teacher autonomy. In his viewpoint, “language teachers are more likely to succeed in promoting learner autonomy if their own education has encouraged them to be autonomous” (p. 180). This can be realised by involving teachers in the process of setting learning aims, designing course content, or assessing their own achievements in the training program. More recently, empirical research has shown multiple efforts of teacher education programs in creating a self-directed learning environment for their teacher
learners (see Brown, R. Smith, & Ushioda, 2007; R. Smith & Erdogan, 2008), which is deemed crucial to the development of teaching autonomy. Similarly, Vieira, Barbosa, Paiva, and Fernandes (2008) and Jiménez Raya and Vieira (2015) put forward the concept of “pedagogy for autonomy”, which emphasises “teacher education for learner autonomy” (p. 5). This pedagogy highlights the need for teacher education to train teachers to become reflective, autonomous professionals, and to be able to critically evaluate and challenge their contexts to achieve their own as well as their students’ autonomy. This line of research also foregrounds the assumed realistic gap between ‘what should be’ (teachers’ desire to extend their limit of professional freedom) and ‘what can be’ (the actual steps they can take toward greater autonomy) (Jiménez Raya, Lamb, & Vieira, 2007).

Though extensive, much of this body of work has been done in the field of teaching or language teaching in general. The dearth of research that investigates the teaching autonomy of English language teachers in relation to teacher education programs (see Benson, 2010) was conducted in contexts where teacher learners did not experience any major differences in terms of the context and the nature of teaching and learning. This further justifies the need for research into the autonomy of TESOL teachers who underwent training in a context different from their teaching environment (overseas programs), or who were in teacher education programs that were different in nature from local teacher programs (localised programs). Specifically, these teachers were trained in the BANA (Britain, Australasia, and North American) contexts or following BANA-influenced curricula which tend to adopt the integrationist approach to education (Holliday, 1994). In these environments, it is generally conceived that teaching is more learner-centered, skills-based, and less constrained by the curriculum. However, their returned context of teaching is that of TESEP (tertiary, secondary, and primary sectors in Outer and Expanding Circle countries), which is considered collectionist, or of high structure nature (Alise & Teddlie, 2010; Nunan & Lamb, 1996), which means it is more subject-centered and curricularly constrained. Therefore, an investigation into the impact of BANA training on TESEP teachers’ teaching practice promises to benefit not only teachers themselves in terms of allowing them to critically reflect on their professional
autonomy, but also teacher educators and BANA/Inner-Circle TESOL programs regarding the value and applicability of teacher training for overseas practitioners.

Against this background, this chapter will present the findings to the second set of research question:

2. What is the professional experience in post-training periods of overseas- and localised-trained teachers in terms of their classroom teaching realities? Specifically,

2.1. To what extent do they exercise their autonomy in teaching practice?

2.2. What roles do teacher education courses play in intensifying and/or mitigating their autonomy?

As in the previous chapter, the quantitative findings will be presented alongside qualitative results. Where appropriate, comparisons will be made about the teaching autonomy level of teachers from both program types.

6.2. Teachers who attended overseas programs

The findings reported in this section were gathered from three data collection sources: the questionnaire delivered to 45 Vietnamese TESOL teachers who attended Master’s level program in Inner-Circle institutions, the individual interviews with 10 of the teachers, and six observation sessions with Teachers 4, 5, and 10, who worked at a university in central Vietnam.

6.2.1. Overseas-trained teachers’ self-reported degree of teaching autonomy

The questionnaire data show that the teachers rated themselves relatively highly in their perceived overall autonomy level: $M=38.2, SD=2.07 (n=45)$. It should be noted that the maximum autonomy score is 55 (11 statements measured on a 5-point Likert scale). The mean of 38.2 suggests that the teachers considered themselves to have a certain degree of autonomy in their teaching practice. Noticeably, the breakdown of this score into two preconceived constructs, namely curriculum autonomy and general autonomy, shows differences in the teachers’ perceived level of autonomy regarding different aspects of teaching (general teaching autonomy refers to classroom standards of conduct and personal on-the-job decision making; and curriculum autonomy concerns issues about selection of teaching materials, and instructional planning and sequencing (Pearson & Hall, 1993)).

Figure 6.1 demonstrates that the teachers had the most freedom to make decisions on classroom events such as ‘setting expectations for students’ learning” ($M=4.44,$
‘Describing own assessment’ has the lowest rating among the constructs associated with general autonomy ($M=3.47, SD=0.81$). However, this number is still higher than the teachers’ self-rated level of curriculum autonomy, with the reported average rating of most items being lower than the middle value, 3.0, of the 1 to 5 Likert scale type. The highest rating item for curriculum autonomy was ‘deciding teaching guidelines and procedures’ ($M=3.02, SD=0.62$).

To determine if this difference was statistically significant, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used as the data were not normally distributed. The results indicated that the teachers had a significantly higher score for general autonomy than curriculum autonomy ($Z=-2.315, p=0.021$), with a large effect size $r=.52$. These findings suggest that they experienced less autonomy when it comes to making curriculum-related decisions; meanwhile, they had greater freedom to decide on day-to-day, classroom-related aspects of teaching. Details as to how this is demonstrated in their teaching practice will be further explored through the interviews and observation data.

### 6.2.2. Selection of teaching content and materials

‘Deciding learning content and learning goals’ had the lowest ratings among all aspects of teacher autonomy ($M=2.13, SD=0.66$ and $M=2.47, SD=0.69$ respectively). This was found to correspond with the teaching practice of the observed and interviewed teachers.
A general rule regarding the development of teaching content and goals across different institutions is that teachers of the same courses were expected to comply with the same syllabi, which prescribe course objectives, course content and learning outcomes. This was to ensure fairness and uniformity of course delivery. More noticeably, this task of curriculum design was often entrusted to an elite group of presumably experienced senior teachers, leaving younger and less experienced ones with little freedom on what to teach. Teacher 10 remarked, “The unit descriptions for the courses are designed by senior teachers who were once my teachers, and they have taught the courses so many times, so it has become an unwritten rule that we should follow them.” Meanwhile, according to Teacher 9 who had nearly 20 years of teaching experience and could be considered senior in the profession, it was the long bureaucratic procedure that was required if course content/goals were to be changed that might have hindered his faculty members from revising them on a regular basis. As a result, course content was recycled from one academic year to another, despite the fact that new students arrived every year.

Similarly, the surveyed teachers reported a low level of autonomy on ‘selecting own materials’ ($M=2.62$, $SD=0.68$). This was demonstrated in the interview accounts on textbook selection. Teachers 1, 4, and 10 who worked in the same university stated that the adoption of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) as a new proficiency benchmark for Vietnamese learners of English has led to the replacement of coursebooks for teaching the four skills with new ones twice within four years, which was unprecedented. The selection process was done unilaterally by the head of a teaching section in the English Department, with little discussion or consultation with the group of teachers directly in charge of the courses. Therefore, the selected books usually failed to satisfy the learning and teaching needs of both students and teachers.

Given this lack of autonomy in material selection, Teacher 4, who was put in charge of teaching methodology courses for English teacher trainees expressed her disappointment about the mismatch between the theories on textbook selection she conveyed to her students, and the teaching realities that they would encounter in the future as secondary or high school teachers of English. She felt it ironic that she taught them principles of textbook selection and evaluation, while knowing very few of them would actually have the opportunity to apply the knowledge: “Most of them probably are going to teach in the formal education system, where a textbook series designed by MOET is used across all levels. They won’t have a choice.” (Teacher 4)
When asked what they had done given these restrictions in teaching content and use of materials, the teachers appeared to be employing remedying solutions such as relying partly on the textbook and incorporating materials they chose themselves. Teacher 8 and 9 occasionally included materials they took from elsewhere when they thought that the textbook content was not sufficient for students’ learning. As for Teacher 1, she often followed the textbook during the first half of a lesson, so that students would not feel she was teaching them something not part of the curriculum, and also to reassure herself that she was at least keeping to the department’s content requirements. For the other half she gave students practice exercises or activities collected from other sources which she considered more relevant to their levels and interest. The following key instructional episode (Borg, 2006) taken from Teacher 1’s classroom observation illustrates this:

The focus of the speaking lesson is for students to practice expressing likes and dislikes. The teacher starts by organising a guessing game to elicit leisure activities that students like doing. Activities such as ‘playing football’, ‘watching movies’, ‘listening to music’, or ‘playing tennis’ are brought up. Next, the teacher directs the students to review common structures used to talk about likes/dislikes. These structures come directly from the textbook. After that, students work in groups of three to plan a student club/society and design a simple poster to advertise their club. Students come up with different types of clubs such as Dancing, Sports, or Movie Club. After about twenty minutes of preparation, two groups get together and take turns to present their posters to each other. Each group has to convince students from the other group to join their club. It should be noted that this activity is not taken from the textbook.

This episode demonstrates how Teacher 1 decided to not follow the speaking activity provided in the textbook and had her students do a different one that she took from a teaching idea website. In the subsequent retrospective interview session, she explained that the reason for this was she wanted to make the task more familiar to students’ real-life experience: “The textbook activity asks students to discuss different hobbies, which is fine, but I think it’s not very interesting. Since I know these students are interested in joining different clubs and societies because this is their first semester at university, I think the task that I used was more motivating to them.” This teacher also said that she had skipped a few grammar exercises in the book as they were quite easy for the students’ level. This example shows Teacher 1’s effort to exercise her autonomy by
using additional learning materials in her teaching and adapting the prescribed textbook based on her students’ interest and language proficiency.

Other teachers, however, seemed apprehensive and unsure about what they could do. For the most part these teachers were afraid of disrupting the teaching system, reasoning that they were not in a powerful position to make changes.

How could I go to a senior teacher who designs a course syllabus and say to her, “I think you should change this and that”? In Vietnamese culture we have this characteristic called ‘harmony’, and I think doing that would affect the harmony between me and my teachers or colleagues. Besides, I was not in a position to determine course contents, so what I wanted to do was out of my ability. That was also an obstacle against application of new knowledge and skills. (Teacher 10)

Additionally, the teachers admitted that such a lack of freedom seemed to pose more problems to them after their return from overseas training. They wondered why in their previous teaching they took for granted the restrictions in selecting course content and materials. In their opinion, these constraints were most difficult to deal with, as they had to do with the traditional operation of the education system, which is very hard to change:

Once you’re in the [education] system, you have to get accustomed to how it works. It’s not the other way around... This may not be much of a problem if you always stay in that system, but if you’ve ventured out and known better and now returned, which is my case, it becomes more difficult…” (Teacher 1)

Reflecting on their learning experience in overseas TESOL programs, the study participants thought that their course lectures in these programs had a lot of autonomy in various aspects of their teaching, such as deciding course goals based on students’ needs, selecting coursebooks, and making changes to course content based on students’ feedback. Teacher 10 commented:

“They [lecturers in overseas TESOL program] could do anything they wanted, as long as their teaching met the overall learning objectives that the university or the department required… In comparison, I don’t think teachers in our context have much autonomy”. (Teacher 10)

6.2.3. Course assessment
As revealed from the interviews, the key factor causing the teachers’ hesitation in making changes to the predetermined teaching content and textbooks was the assessment methods
which were also made consistent across classes. This likely explains why in the questionnaire the teachers rated their freedom of designing their own assessment to be lowest among the items measuring general autonomy \((M=3.47, SD=0.81)\). Particularly for the interviewed teachers, their end-of-semester tests were taken from a “test bank” and administered to all students in the same cohort, while they could design their own classroom tests. However, they also wrote these tests in a similar form to the standardised CEFR tests to familiarise students with the test format. The teachers seemed greatly concerned by students’ exam performance, believing this somehow reflected their teaching effectiveness: “I don’t want my students’ grades to be lower than those of students in other classes just because they don’t know the test format well. I also want to maintain the uniformity in assessment between my class and others” (Teacher 1). In the same vein, Teacher 7 wanted to implement continuous assessment in her teaching as she learnt about and experienced its effectiveness in the teacher training courses. However, she found it difficult as this was not in agreement with the assessment methods that other teachers in her department were doing, which was summative by nature.

This restriction in forms of assessment was also demonstrated in Teacher 10’s actual teaching practice. Below is an instructional episode when she was conducting one session of her Speaking course.

The teacher pairs up students and asks each pair to do a speaking activity that resembles a task in the final exam, which for the level of second year major English students, are picture description tasks (B1 type of activity according to CEFR levels). At the beginning of the class, the teacher hands each pair a picture with a few questions as the prompt. After 1 minute, the first pair starts to make a conversation based on the given picture, which depicts activities for a summer holiday in a beachside city. They discuss and decide on three activities they would like to do together. The students seem familiar with the task and talk for more than three minutes. At the end of each presentation, the teacher compliments the students on their strong points, and provides correction about their pronunciation and word choice. The students are also given a detailed evaluation worksheet, in which their performance is evaluated on a 1-5 rating scale based on their fluency, accuracy, vocabulary choice, and interaction.

This episode demonstrated the influence of assessment conformities in the teaching practice of Teacher 10. In the retrospective interview that followed, she stated that she had recently made this exam-oriented activity a routine in her speaking course so that her
students would be better prepared for exams. However, she did not think it was motivating to her students. She also questioned the authenticity of the activity, “I am very doubtful about whether the students would have to describe pictures that frequently when they use English in real life contexts”. Teacher 10 definitely had a choice in using class activities; nonetheless, she decided to include learning tasks that were not inherently inspiring, but were helpful for the purpose of exam practice. This observation episode, together with the participants’ low ratings for autonomy in assessment, suggests that assessment constraints might also negatively impact teachers’ teaching practice.

6.2.4. Everyday teaching activities and the application of overseas training

Given constraints in terms of curriculum-related decisions, the teachers found their everyday teaching lessons to be the ground where they could, to a certain extent, exercise their teaching autonomy. They had the highest ratings for their autonomy concerning the daily aspects of teaching such as “setting expectations for students’ learning”, “use of time and classroom space”, and “designing learning activities” (see Figure 6.1). Particularly, the interviewed teachers expressed excitement about designing their own teaching activities, partly because they were able to utilise the knowledge and skills acquired from overseas training. One of Teacher 1’s successful efforts was allowing her students to assess themselves and their peers in some class assignments, a practice she rarely did before. It made her students become more critical of their friends’ and their own learning, as well as lessened her workload. She attributed this to increased knowledge of testing and assessment gained from the Australian TESOL program.

Similarly, Teachers 5 and 7 claimed to implement more task-based activities in their lessons, after having a deeper understanding of the characteristics of communicative and task-based language teaching in TESOL courses. For Teacher 8, one of the highlights of her teaching was that she was able to use technological tools such as blogs or Facebook to manage class discussions. This helped her to engage better with her students.

Freedom of practice was also exhibited in the teachers’ setting of expectations for student learning, as demonstrated by the following instructional episode of Teacher 4 when she was teaching a methodology course on materials development.

The students are given an application exercise on textbook evaluation and adaptation. In eight groups of five, they discuss and evaluate one English textbook currently used in the formal education system following a particular pre-assigned criterion of textbook evaluation (e.g., method, instruction, syllabus, topics, cultural
appropriacy, etc.). The teacher asks her students beforehand to always bring with them an English textbook for use in class activities. She insists that they pay more attention to the weaknesses of the book. After each group has presented their evaluation, the teacher asks challenging questions to probe on why and how a particular textbook can be improved. She repeatedly encourages them to be more critical in their evaluation. This seems effective as the last two presenting groups are able to point out many points in the evaluated textbooks that need improvement, as well as give good suggestions on how to adapt them.

This episode demonstrates a teaching practice that emphasised student autonomy (students were asked to bring their own materials for class activities), as well as critical thinking (the teacher challenged students to think critically about the quality of textbooks). Teacher 4, the instructional teacher, insisted on promoting these aspects in her teaching, as she had learnt the importance of students taking charge of their own learning, and being independent thinkers. She explicitly claimed this to be the influence of her US TESOL program.

The MA program in the US has definitely influenced my teaching practice in this sense. The education system in Vietnam does not emphasise critical thinking but as classroom teachers, we can make some little change by making students think critically and provoking their thinking. (Teacher 4)

The teacher participants’ self-rated degree of autonomy as well as their interview accounts and instructional practice shows that they enjoyed a greater level of autonomy in actual everyday teaching itself, than with curriculum-related aspects of teaching. The application of knowledge and skills gained from the teacher education programs was also demonstrated better in day-to-day teaching activities.

Not all of the teachers’ experimentations with new teaching ideas, however, were successful. For example, in one of her speaking classes, Teacher 1 instructed her students to use Audacity, a voice recording and editing software she came to know during her Australian training. She wanted her students to use this software to make podcasts for practicing speaking. Nevertheless, she realised there were not enough facilities for them to work with the software at her university, and neither did they have good computers at home. Teacher 1 admitted that this incident made clear the gap between what she had learnt and what was possible in the classroom. Likewise, when teaching a course on using technology in language teaching, Teacher 10, apart from working on the unit on PowerPoint, made an attempt to introduce other alternative programs such as Prezi.
However, due to time constraint she could not demonstrate how Prezi works. All she could do was giving her students some extra information so those interested could explore further by themselves. Therefore, these teachers were concerned that even when they possessed some agency to innovate their classroom teaching practice, they remained subject to contextual restrictions.

6.2.5. Autonomy in overseas teacher education programs
Reflecting on their learning experience in the overseas teacher education programs, the teachers claimed that the learning environment and the teaching styles they experienced had allowed them to be autonomous learners. Teacher 4 and 10 both said they were able to select courses to take each semester, as well as to choose topics for their assignments, and associated these as demonstration of learner autonomy. More specifically, Teacher 5 recalled that one of his lecturers always referred to his students as ‘colleagues’, not ‘students’, since he considered himself as well as the students in the course to be teachers who are more or less equal. This lecturer then gave course participants the opportunity to propose their own deadlines to submit their assignments; he also strongly encouraged self- and peer assessment in his teaching. Teacher 5 therefore commented, “I had a feeling that all of us in that course were taking part in a professional development workshop, rather than learning a course, our opinions were highly valued and we all could learn a lot from each other”.

However, according to the teachers’ accounts, there was virtually no incident in which contextual constraints to teaching were discussed, shared, or made explicit in the training courses. Although they were aware of potential difficulties in applying what they learnt from teacher training even before returning to their teaching context, they wished they were involved in critical discussions about these constraints during training.

6.3. Teachers who attended localised programs
The findings reported in this section came from two data sources: the questionnaire delivered to 40 Vietnamese teachers of English who had Master’s level training in joint TESOL programs between an Inner-Circle institution and a Vietnamese one (localised programs), and the individual interviews with 10 of these localised-trained teachers. Where appropriate, these findings will be compared with those of teachers who attended overseas programs.
6.3.1. Localised-trained teachers’ self-reported degree of autonomy

When evaluating their own level of teaching autonomy, teachers attending localised programs demonstrated a higher degree of autonomy than those attending overseas programs (see Table 6.1). A Mann-Whitney U test for non-normally distributed data showed that this difference is statistically significant ($U=317, p=.000$). It means that localised-trained teachers appeared to have significantly greater freedom in making professional decisions than teachers from overseas programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overseas</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>2.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Localised</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>3.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Maximum score = 55 (11 statements measured on a 5-point Likert scale)

More specifically, an examination of the constituents of the autonomy construct shows higher ratings by teachers attending localised programs than those of overseas programs across the four items measuring curriculum autonomy. Localised-trained teachers rated themselves above the mid-point level (3.0) in all aspects of curriculum autonomy. The differences in value between teachers from two program types’ ratings for curriculum autonomy were quite large, ranging between 0.61 and 1.40. As for general autonomy, this difference was lesser, with the value differences ranging between 0.03 and 0.2. This shows that teachers taking localised programs perceived themselves to have greater autonomy in making decisions on curricular aspects of teaching than those participating in overseas programs. At the same time, the lesser variability in general autonomy ratings could mean that overseas- and localised-trained teachers did not differ much in their freedom to decide on general teaching issues. Noticeably, like teachers who attended overseas programs, the teachers taking localised programs also had higher ratings for general autonomy than curriculum autonomy, even though this difference was not statistically significant ($Z=-2.342, p=0.190$). In the next sections these discrepancies in self-ratings between teachers who attended the two types of teacher education programs will be explained based on the interview data.
6.3.2. Selection of learning content

As with teachers who attended overseas programs, deciding learning content has the lowest rating among the four aspects of curriculum autonomy, as rated by teachers participating in localised programs. The mean of 3.53 (SD=0.87) in the 5-point Likert scale can be interpreted as that the teachers were in between the ‘neutral’ and ‘agree’ points when it comes to their freedom in deciding learning content. The interview data reveal that they were quite satisfied with the degree of autonomy that they had in selecting course content; however, they still wished they were given more freedom to make decisions on what their students should learn. Particularly, the characteristics of the teachers’ workplace seem to play an important role in influencing their autonomy in deciding on learning content. This will be unpacked in the paragraphs that follow.

The six teachers working at privately-owned institutions (including private universities, international schools, or English language centers) were relatively content with the autonomy they had in selecting learning content. They shared a common experience that the content of their courses was quite frequently reviewed and updated. Even though they might not be the course designers, at the end of each teaching term they were given the opportunity to review and provide suggestions on course content based on their observation of students’ reaction and attitude toward learning these content. Teacher C recalled an incident when her proposal regarding adding a module on ‘Email writing’ to an intermediate level Writing course was approved by the Head of Department:

Figure 6.2. Teacher autonomy level by construct
“My suggestion came from my experience in interacting with my students via email. Some wrote very formal ones, while others were too casual. So I thought we should have email writing as part of one of our Writing courses as our students will likely encounter this form of writing a lot later in their work lives”. (Teacher C)

In explaining this practice of paying attention to teachers’ views in terms of learning content, Teacher B made a remark that private institutions are often better oriented toward addressing students’ learning needs than public ones:

“My school is aware that our students, or their parents to be more exact, are investing a large amount of money in their children’s education. The school administrators and the teachers should of course focus on making our ‘customers’ happy by regularly innovating the teaching and learning programs”. (Teacher B)

Likewise, Teacher H who worked at a well-known English center said that every year all teachers in the school needed to fill out a survey form that asked them to evaluate different aspects of their teaching and their students’ learning. This teacher commented that such practice encouraged her to think critically about her teaching content. These examples suggest that the teaching environment played an important role in conditioning localised-trained teachers to exercise their autonomy.

Nevertheless, these teachers, to some extent, still experienced certain constraints in relation to selecting course content. This happened most frequently with courses that were considered well-designed, and presumably needed little modification. In one course that he taught, Teacher F was provided with very detailed descriptions, guidelines, and even lesson plans for all teaching sessions. Since the course was a successful one held as the top ‘selling’ course of the language center where he worked, specific guidelines were given to ensure a similar quality of delivery across different instructional teachers. While it made his teaching more straightforward and lessened her preparation time, he found this uniform approach to teaching somewhat restricted. “Some students might be quick to grasp certain contents but need more assistance to understand others. Also, this rate of acquisition often varies from one class to another. Thus, I sometimes find myself struggling a little to cover all required topics”, Teacher F noted. As for Teacher H, her concern lay in her institution’s failure to address the changes in learning content suggested by teachers in the teacher survey on learning content she mentioned earlier. This teacher thought that because the Center was very revenue-oriented, teachers’ opinions might not be taken as seriously as students’ and their parents’. She pointed out
that there were some pedagogical problems that were visible to teachers, but since they
did not come up in students’ and parents’ survey responses, the school might not choose
to resolve them. This made her feel that teachers’ professional viewpoints were not
adequately considered by the institutions.

On the other hand, four teachers (A, D, I, J) who taught at public institutions
demonstrated lesser autonomy as they talked about their selection of learning content.
According to Teacher A, all courses she taught was designed by other staff members.
Since she started teaching at her university, she had always followed what was written in
the course outline and had never questioned it. “All I’ve done is try to cover the required
learning content as well as I can. I think that once a learning topic is part of the curriculum
it means it should be useful to learners.” While accepting that she did not have much say
in making decisions on learning topics, this teacher did not think it was a problem.
Instead, she considered this an obvious part of the teaching procedure. Meanwhile,
Teacher J was aware of the importance of teachers having autonomy in their teaching;
however, she admitted that she was too busy dealing with her heavy teaching workload
to think of ‘autonomy’ for her teaching:

“It [teacher autonomy] is an ‘idealistic’ concept to me, and I think probably to
many of my colleagues too. I am more concerned about whether I can prepare
well and deliver lessons effectively, than about how much freedom I have in
deciding on what to teach”. (Teacher J)

Based on these interview accounts of teachers attending localised programs, it
could be seen that their freedom to make decisions on learning content varied
significantly according to where they worked. Those who taught at privately-owned
institutions reported greater flexibility than teachers working at public universities.
Noticeably, the latter were accepting of their teaching situation and did not consider it
important as to whether they could or could not select their teaching content. When asked
if the localised teacher education programs had any influence on their teaching in terms
of selecting learning content, the teachers were not able to say with certainty if it was the
training they received or the professional environment they were in that impacted on their
autonomy. For instance, Teacher C, whose proposal to add a new learning content to a
previously designed course was approved, said that in retrospect her success might have
stemmed from her own observation of her students’ learning needs, and the flexible
teaching program of her institution. This teacher did not think this could be associated
with her previous training in the localised program. Similarly, Teacher E said that neither
her teaching environment nor learning program helped to change her preconceived idea that curricular aspects of teaching are not under a teacher’s control. This finding speaks to the nature of the professional environment as well as reveals a gap in teacher education in terms of enabling teachers to be self-directed.

6.3.3. Selection of learning materials

Another major theme in the teachers’ interview accounts regarding curriculum autonomy is the selection of learning materials. As seen in Figure 6.2, the mean of 3.93 is the highest rating among all the four items measuring curriculum autonomy. However, the standard deviation of 1.0 indicates that there was considerable variability across individual ratings. The interview accounts again display differences in autonomy between teachers who worked at public and private institutions, which is likely to explain for the large standard deviation of the quantitative ratings.

As with teachers taking overseas programs, all of whom were affiliated with tertiary public institutions, the four teachers attending localised programs who worked at public universities were well-aware of their restricted choice of learning materials. Teacher D said that she was not able to self-select her teaching materials, especially textbooks. If she wanted to use new materials, she needed to have permission from many people, including her supervisors and the administrative staff, most of whom were not English majors. Therefore, their decisions were mostly based on the financial budget, the revenue, the education law, and other factors unrelated to the course content itself. This procedure gradually discouraged her from attempting to innovate her teaching and learning materials. Another obstacle was the lack of resources reported in all the four institutions where these teachers were based. They expressed great concern over the availability of reference materials. Teacher A commented that if she did not use the available textbooks for her teaching, she had very few resources to turn to except for Internet-based materials, which are not always reliable in terms of content and pedagogical orientation. This lack of academic resources is not uncommon in non-Western countries where many institutions are under-resourced (see Canagarajah, 1999). Apparently, such a reality does not only widen the well-known materialistic gap between the haves and the have-nots in the academic world (cf. Liyanage & Barlett, 2008), but also impedes the possibility of teachers being able to select materials for their teaching.

Teachers of private institutions, on the other hand, considered themselves to have a relatively high level of autonomy in deciding on learning materials. First, while
acknowledging that they also taught based on a prescribed set of textbooks, they seemed to be more satisfied with their materials than those teaching at public institutions. As was observed in teachers’ selection of learning content, the commercialised nature of many courses offered by private institutions made it compulsory for them to be attentive to using relevant and updated learning materials. Teacher G, who worked at a foreign-owned language center, was quite satisfied with the materials she was using as they often came as a set of textbooks and other suggested additional materials. This gave her flexibility in choosing which one to use depending on her students’ level and interest. This view was echoed by Teacher E, who said that apart from core materials, she had the freedom of adding other resources that she thought would be useful for her students: “The university has quite a large learning resource center, so I often go there to look for new references”.

(Teacher E)

Talking about the role of the teacher education programs, the teachers attached importance to how teacher education had empowered them to deal with constraints in selecting materials. This is particularly true of teachers working at public institutions who were often required to use prescribed teaching materials. Teacher I reported that after learning about material adaptation in her TESOL program, she became inspired to make changes to the textbook content, and spent more time to adapt units that were not very appropriate to learners. She shared that in one assignment in a teaching methods course, she was asked by the lecturer to evaluate the appropriateness of a learning unit from one of the textbooks she was using at the time and make any necessary adaptation. In completing the assignment, Teacher I was particularly happy with the adaptations she made, and decided to implement them in her actual teaching. “I felt really good then because I could use what I did for my training in my teaching. It made learning much more practical”, she commented. Interestingly, inspired by a module on extensive reading in her localised TESOL program, Teacher D decided to implement an extensive reading scheme in her course, She asked her students to read graded simplified books by Oxford or Penguin as part of class assignment, and afterwards write a short summary and reflection. This teacher considered this activity a good way for her students to engage with authentic English materials, without her having to worry about not having enough time in class to introduce extra materials to students.

As for teachers working at private institutions who were already quite content with their selection and use of teaching and learning materials, undergoing teacher education helped to reinforce their view about the importance of teachers having autonomy in
deciding on learning materials. They admitted that they previously did not attach much importance to professional decision-making in terms of selecting learning materials. According to Teacher E, she had taken for granted the flexibility that her institutions provided her (e.g., she could choose from a list of suggested materials one or two she wanted to use). Taking a course that covered issues related to material design and development, however, brought to her attention the necessity of giving teachers the opportunity to select their own materials. Teacher G was also more appreciative of the fact that teachers in her department were encouraged to raise their opinions on selected coursebooks. Another thing this teacher noted, however, was that not many of them took the chance of being asked to comment on course materials to make valuable contribution. “I think at that time many of my colleagues and I thought that the pre-selected textbooks were good”, Teacher G stated. In this regard, TESOL training helped her to be more critical about her teaching materials.

As evident from these accounts, teachers attending localised programs differed quite markedly from those who had attended overseas programs in their degree of freedom regarding selection of teaching and learning materials. The teaching environment also appeared to be an important factor influencing their autonomy, with teachers working for private institutions experiencing more flexibility than those teaching at public institutions. Accordingly, Master’s level teacher education provided teachers of public institutions with teaching ideas to deal with constraints in selecting materials, while reinforcing the importance of teaching autonomy in teachers who taught at private institutions.

6.3.4. Course assessment

An aspect of general autonomy that was frequently mentioned in localised-trained teachers’ interview accounts was freedom to carry out assessment practice. Like teachers attending overseas program, those taking localised programs rated their autonomy to design course assessments as the second lowest across all autonomy items ($M=3.50$, $SD=1.11$). Again, a large deviation was found among individual items, which shows variation in the teachers’ self-ratings. Despite this, the interview accounts revealed that all the interviewed teachers were largely restricted by the type of assessments they could give their students. This applied to teachers who worked at public institutions as well as private ones, even though there was variability in the nature of the constraints. The
following paragraphs will shed light on the teachers’ autonomy in giving course assessment.

The first major lack of assessment autonomy was that they did not have much say in final assessments of their courses. Like teachers attending overseas programs, Teachers A, D, I, and J of localised programs shared commonalities among their public institutions that their final exams were designed based on either well-known international test formats such as IELTS, TOEFL, or CEFR exams, or formats that had been used internally for a few years with little adaptation. Teacher D said that even though at the end of each semester she was asked to submit test items that were to be used in the final exam, she had to follow a pre-determined format closely. Likewise, Teacher B who was put in charge of teaching English grammar at an international school was not satisfied with how his students were assessed. He claimed to teach grammar in a communicative way following a task-based approach; however, in their grammar tests his students were given all discrete multiple-choice items, which failed to assess their communicative competence. This teacher said that all the tests were written by senior English-speaking teachers in the academic department with no consultation with the teaching staff.

Another concern was the lack of variety in assessment types. Teachers who taught non-English-major university students were concerned about the scarcity of ongoing assessment practice. In these cases, considerably more weight was given to end-of-semester tests or final exams, which prevented teachers from using formative kinds of to gain more knowledge of their students’ learning. Teacher E stated that for some courses she had students do group presentations as part of assessment. However, she did not see them put much effort into doing the assignment, as it accounted for only 10% of the total course grade, while a mid-term and a final exam occupied a much larger proportion. “The students would rather spend time studying for exams to get a good result”, Teacher E explained. Meanwhile, teachers working at international schools and language institutions reported having even fewer opportunities to vary their assessment types, as final exams were the dominant assessment practice.

Concerning the impact of teacher training, a common theme among the teachers was that they were inspired by the new knowledge and practice that they learnt from training, but found it challenging to implement them, or to suggest their implementation. Teacher B, upon learning that discrete-point grammar testing was not effective, and neither did it reflect the communicative way that grammar was taught in his class, suggested to his supervisor that they should follow a communicative method when giving
grammar tests. Intriguingly, this teacher used an assignments he did for one of his MA courses, in which he wrote about the importance of communicative language testing, as evidence to support his view:

“I showed the paper to my supervisors, saying to them that this was what I learnt about grammar testing and it is a new trend that has been followed by many language teachers and students in other places. As I got a good grade for that assignment, and also put a lot of effort into it, I thought I might be able to convince them”. (Teacher B)

His effort, however, did not reap the desired benefit, as the supervisors took a look at his paper but still carried on with the traditional method of testing. Such incidents caused serious disappointment among teachers, since it devalued their professional judgments and discouraged them from offering their opinions on matters relating to pedagogy.

6.3.5. Selecting teaching methods and learning activities
As have been reported in section 5.2.5, teachers who took part in localised TESOL training programs acknowledged the role of teacher education in leading them to adopt a more comprehensive and flexible view toward teaching methods. Specifically, they claimed to have a better and more critical understanding of current approaches to language teaching such as communicative and task-based language teaching. Also, they developed a more relaxed attitude toward employing different teaching methods and showing support for context-appropriate teaching methodology. Such a shift in thinking and attitude was clearly reflected in their teaching practice, particularly their high self-rating of the freedom to select teaching methods ($M=4.08, SD=0.62$) and learning activities ($M=4.13, SD=0.33$), as well as in their interview accounts.

Despite constraints in deciding learning content, materials, and assessment, teachers working at both private and public institutions felt that they had a relatively high degree of autonomy as to how they should teach these contents and materials. Teacher G, having been convinced by the effectiveness of a task-based approach to language teaching because of teacher training, was very determined to carry out task-based learning activities. This teacher claimed to have adapted the textbook content on numerous occasions to make it more task-oriented. She gave an example that when she was teaching a speaking unit on job seeking, she adapted a simple question-and-answer activity into a more real-world task. In this task her students were asked to form teams to
role-play job interviews, one was interview panels and the other was job seekers. She commented that the task was received well by the students, and she enjoyed having such kind of flexibility in her teaching. Similarly, Teacher B, after having the opportunity to read and discuss at length topics related to CLT in his TESOL training, was inspired by communicative grammar teaching. He therefore decided to follow this approach when teaching grammar to bilingual students at the international school where he worked. This teacher also resorted to making adjustments to textbook activities, and added meaning-focused tasks to enhance grammar acquisition. He claimed that his lessons were not just about explaining grammar points and doing grammar exercises, even though that was what his supervisor expected him to do as a grammar teacher. Teacher B explained for his selection of teaching approach as follows:

“My supervisors thought that the communicative approach should be used for teaching language skills such as speaking, reading, writing, or listening, but I disagree. I’ve learnt and also know from experience that learners are likely to internalise grammar forms better if those forms are introduced to them in context, and if they can practice them in meaningful situations”. (Teacher B)

Teacher D, who earlier reported a reorientation of her understanding of ‘communicativeness’ in language teaching, said that she now combined both form- and meaning-focused activities using different methods, including both highly communicative and less communicative ones. She stated that her choice of methods had become to depend on the learning context and her students’ levels, rather than on what was prescribed in textbooks or teacher guides.

Along with adapting learning activities from textbooks, teachers attending localised programs also reported introducing innovative learning activities and/or allowed for a wide variety of learning strategies used by their students. For example, for one of her English for Business courses, Teacher J gave her students a project-based assignment in which they worked in groups to research and write reports on the marketing strategy of a well-known product of their preference. She said that this learning activity was her response to the lack of freedom to design assessment tasks. “I knew that my students would not put a lot of effort in doing a class activity if it was not assessed, so I had to think of ways to make the activity interesting to motivate them intrinsically” (Teacher J). Teacher E, in another vein, was particularly satisfied with her decision to allow her students to switch to their first language (Vietnamese) in their English lessons. She previously thought that second languages learners should avoid using their first
language while learning a second language. “I was very strict to my students and insisted that they should speak English and English only in my class”, she admitted. However, after learning about the benefits of codeswitching in a Sociolinguistics course which was part of her TESOL program, she began to change her view and became more flexible with her students’ use of the mother tongue. “I now think that it’s okay if my students use Vietnamese while discussing a cognitive-challenging activity, as it may help them complete the task more easily. As long as they still use English most of the time in language practice tasks, I’m fine with them codeswitching”, Teacher E elaborated. The inclusion of this useful and updated sociolinguistic knowledge, which has attracted considerable scholarly attention in the field of applied linguistics under different labels such as ‘translanguaging’ (see Heugh, 2015), or ‘multilingual education’ which emphasises the role of the mother tongue (see Skutnabb-Kangas & Heugh, 2012), appeared to have positively influenced how localised-trained teachers perceived their students’ learning strategies.

While being quite autonomous in their selection of teaching methods and learning activities, teachers attending localised programs still reported certain constraints. The most common problem was that restrictions in curricular aspects of teaching were found to have limited their choices of teaching and learning activities. A typical example of this is the case of Teacher B, whose suggestion to follow a communicative format in grammar testing was not considered by his supervisors. Although this teacher still tried to implement communicative grammar instruction in his everyday teaching, he conceded that he could not stay immune to the negative washback effect of discrete-point grammar testing. He had to give his students discrete-point grammar exercises as part of learning activities to make sure that they would do well in the test. Additionally, to some teachers working at public institutions, the pressure to cover a pre-selected textbook made it harder for them to adapt or introduce new learning activities, since a deviation might result in insufficient time to cover textbook content.

To summarise, with regard to the freedom to select teaching methods and learning materials, the interview responses of teachers attending localised programs aligned strongly with their quantitative ratings. They had the flexibility to decide on a preferred teaching method, adapt textbook activities to better motivate their students, and implement their own learning tasks. During this process, the teacher education programs played the crucial role of deepening and reinforcing their knowledge of contemporary
language teaching methods, as well as providing them with relevant ideas and rationales for teaching activities.

6.3.6. Autonomy in teacher education
Apart from investigating the impact of teacher education on the participants’ autonomy levels in different aspects of teaching, this research also explored whether the actual experience of learning in the TESOL programs impacted on their teaching autonomy. When asked if they were allowed to be autonomous learners during teacher training, teachers attending localised programs were especially appreciative of the freedom given to them when doing course assessments. For example, for an action research project that Teachers E and G did for a research methods course, they were free to research any teaching and learning topic that was of interest to them. Other teachers also shared the same experience of being able to select topics for their assignments. They claimed this to be different from how they were taught in their bachelor’s programs, where most assessment topics were determined by course lecturers.

Another demonstration of learning autonomy was group discussion regarding constraints in applying TESOL knowledge and skills, even though this was not a common incident across interview accounts. Teacher J and F recalled that in a course on curriculum development, after learning about the importance of needs assessment in curriculum design, they had a discussion with their Australian lecturer on how to address students’ learning needs provided all the constraints in curriculum design and material selection faced by many Vietnamese teachers. They considered such a direct mention of teaching constraints to be a useful activity to make connection between what was learnt in theory and what was possible or not possible in practice. Teacher J commented that since the lecturer who taught the course was very interested in learning about ELT in Vietnam, his class activities were often focused on asking participants to think about course issues in the context of their own teaching. Other interviewees, however, did not recall similar occurrences during their TESOL training.

To sum up, the findings of this research have addressed the initially proposed research questions on the level of teaching autonomy of participating teachers and the impact of overseas and localised training on their autonomy in teaching practice. Specifically, they showed that: 1) teachers attending both program types demonstrated a medium level of autonomy in their teaching, with the level of autonomy in general aspects of teaching (e.g., deciding on teaching methods and learning activities) being greater than
that of curricular aspects (e.g., selecting learning content and materials); 2) teacher education programs provided the teachers with professional knowledge and teaching ideas that they could use to innovate their everyday teaching activities and exert general autonomy, and to a certain extent allowed them to be autonomous learners. However, they did not provide teachers with much assistance in dealing with curricular constraints, nor inspire them to create spaces for more teaching autonomy.

6.4. Discussion

This section will discuss the findings on teachers’ teaching autonomy and the impact of teacher education in light of theories and research on teacher autonomy and SLTE.

6.4.1. Constraints in exercising teaching autonomy

The research results reveal constraints faced by teachers attending both types of programs in attempting to exercise their autonomy. These constraints are demonstrated in both the structural and the individual aspects of teacher autonomy, according to McGrath’s (2000) and Benson (2010)’s conceptualisation. Regarding structural features, teachers of public higher education institutions reported to have a low level of curriculum autonomy and were considerably restricted by curriculum-related aspects of teaching. They needed to follow a rigid syllabus that determines course objectives and other teaching materials. This might be explained by the fact that they were in a high-structure teaching and learning environment (Nunan & Lamb, 1996), where much of the compilation and ratification of curricula is done by the Ministry of Education and Training, instead of universities themselves (Hayden & Lam, 2007). This resonates with experience of teachers reported in previous teacher autonomy research (see Benson, 2010; La Ganza, 2004) as well as the expectations of TESOL teachers returning from Anglophone training (Erlam, 2014; Liyanage & Barlett, 2008; Phan, 2008; Yeh, 2011). Furthermore, the teachers were greatly concerned about keeping their teaching within the requirements set by the department and the university. This was largely to maintain uniformity across different teachers who teach the same course, which, according to Jimenéz Raya and Vieira (2015), typifies an educational system that does not trust its teachers. Jimenéz Raya and Vieira criticise standardised educational environments where schools are managed like factories; where teachers are expected to target the same instructional outcomes; and where students are required to learn the same contents at the same pace in the same order. They call this an act of “decontextualising knowledge” (p. viii), and thus depriving
teachers of all meaningful professional freedom. Noticeably, teachers working at private institutions appeared to experience less curricular restriction than those working at public institutions. This difference in working conditions will be discussed in section 6.3.3 of the chapter.

Additionally, the participants were required to conform to assessment practices that they did not have the right to decide or change. This leads to the negative washback effect of teaching to assessment items rather than course objectives. Evidence of this was Teacher 10’s effort to incorporate a large number of monotonous exam-oriented classroom activities into her teaching plan, or Teacher B’s reluctant use of discrete-point exercises in his grammar lessons. Such a finding supports Everhard and Murphy’s (2015) viewpoint regarding the complex relationship between assessment and autonomy, that assessment can influence autonomy in interactive and sometimes conflicting manners depending on how an assessment is implemented. Specifically, an assessment method is an incentive to promoting autonomy if it allows for learners’ self-adjustment, self-monitoring, and higher order thinking; conversely, assessment can be inimical to autonomy if it creates heavy reliance on others’ judgments. Therefore, the fact that the teachers in the present research needed to abide by assessment practices prescribed by others and with which they did not identify, is unarguably an impediment to their professional autonomy.

The present study also foregrounds concerns about professional trust. In the case of teachers attending overseas programs and working at public institutions, the important tasks of selecting coursebooks and designing course syllabi were entrusted to more experienced teachers, leaving younger and less experienced ones less opportunity to meaningfully contribute to structural aspects of their courses. This finding resonates with Lortie’s (1969) claim about a teaching tradition of the past, that experienced teachers usually enjoyed greater autonomy, due to an informal understanding among school administrators that more instructional supervision should be concentrated on beginning than senior teachers. This way of thinking, however, is no longer current, since promoting trust in teachers’ professional judgment is nowadays considered key to building up their professionalism (Blasé & Blasé, 1998; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2012), and thus enhancing teacher autonomy. Hence, the lack of professional trust in younger professionals, as evident in the current study, is seen to hinder teacher autonomy. While this can be explained by referring to the sociocultural context in which the Vietnamese teacher participants were situated, where traditionally age and experience play an
important role in determining one’s social status (see Tran, 1997), it suggests the need for reform so that teachers are equally valued based substantially on their professional competence.

Another demonstration of structural constraints that emerges in the current investigation is that the teacher participants, especially those working in higher education institutions, were under the constant influence of the new national foreign language education policy, albeit in quite a detached manner. Terms such as ‘the National Foreign Language Project 2020’, or ‘the CEFR’, were mentioned many times in their interview accounts. Noticeably, these terms were often used as illustrations of the rules that they had to follow and the framework within which they should conduct their teaching, rather than direct involvement in the reform process. The adoption of the CEFR was primarily aimed at elevating the English competence of Vietnamese people to meet international standards of foreign language proficiency, thereby strengthening the competitiveness of the Vietnamese workforce in the current globalised era (see Dudzik & T. N. Q. Nguyen, 2015). However, as implementers of this policy, the teachers were more concerned by adverse changes generated by the policy, particularly in terms of coursebook selection and testing format, rather than being appreciative of positive aspects of the renovation. This attitude echoes that of teachers in V. H. Nguyen and Hamid’s (2015) research, who admitted that the benefits of employing the new competency framework were overshadowed by the realities that they faced in their teaching practice, such as the gap between students’ actual proficiency level and the standards they were expected to reach, and the lack of CEFR-based learning and testing resources. In the same vein, the implementation of the CEFR seems to add further contextual constraints (e.g., lack of freedom to decide learning content, materials, and assessment methods) to the instructional practice of teachers in the present study, as they failed to identify with the change in a professionally meaningful way. This reflects La Ganza’s (2004) conceptualisation of teacher autonomy in relation to forces external to the institution but which could potentially influence the teacher’s professional freedom. In the context of the current study, these forces can be said to be educational policy-makers whose ideas for change might not always translate well into teaching realities (H. T. Nguyen, Walkinshaw & Pham, 2017), reflecting a “lack of community consultation or input in most language-in-education decisions” (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2005, p. 620).

Apart from restrictions that arise from their own professional contexts, the teacher participants exhibited individual characteristics that prevented them from actively
exercising their teaching autonomy. Teacher 10 was deeply concerned by the fear of disrupting the educational system whenever she wanted to teach differently, taking the Vietnamese cultural feature of respecting harmony in relationship building as a reason for not going against traditional teaching practice. Her apprehension about upsetting her senior colleagues as well as the teaching system and her decision to keep to a harmonious solution could be argued to have constrained her from achieving greater teaching autonomy. This is in line with findings in Phan’s (2008) and Pham’s (n.d.) research with Australian-trained Vietnamese teachers of English at tertiary level. These studies found that while studying in an Inner-Circle academic environment, these teachers continued to uphold many Vietnamese features such as resistance to raising questions to their lecturers, or reluctance to voicing their opinions in class discussions. These characteristics, as argued by Phan (2008, p. 27), “influenced and constrained” (p. 27) teacher learners’ performance in the program.

6.4.2. Teachers’ orientation toward adaptation and flexibility in exercising autonomy
Despite being constrained when making decisions on curriculum-related aspects of teaching, both groups of teachers self-reported a high level of general autonomy regarding classroom-related aspects of teaching. This result is evidential of their ability to operate within curricular constraints. Specifically, they claimed to put into practice the teaching ideas that they had come to embrace as a result of teacher training. Teacher 1’s success in implementing students’ self-assessment in her teaching, Teacher G’s use of task-based activities in her language lessons, as well as Teacher 4’s effort to encourage her students to be more critical in their learning, are representative of what Benson (2010) terms abilities to “create spaces for teacher autonomy” (p. 270), or teachers’ manoeuvrability as they are faced with restrictions when making professional decisions. The teachers of the present research, especially those working in public institutions, were able to work around structural constraints to incorporate learning contents that they considered useful for students’ development, as was also the case for Hong Kong teachers of English in Benson (2010) and Malaysian teachers in Erlam (2014). More noticeably, in the present study some of these spaces created by the teacher participants were oriented toward promoting learner autonomy. Indeed, both Teachers 1 and 10’s students were given the opportunity to take greater responsibility for their learning via doing self-assessment and practicing critical thinking. By purposefully giving their students more freedom in learning, these teachers were simultaneously enhancing their own autonomy. This
strongly supports Little’s (1995, 2000) standpoint that the teacher’s ability to foster learners’ autonomy is one of the most important constituents of teacher autonomy.

6.4.3. The mismatch between theory and practice

In investigating teacher autonomy in relation to teacher education, this research also adds empirical evidence to justify the well-known gap between learnt knowledge and skills and their application. The teachers faced certain adversities in their teaching due to their desire to be autonomous. Teacher 4’s teaching experience demonstrates multiple levels of incompatibility. As a teacher trainer herself, she expressed her disappointment that much of what she taught her teacher trainees about selecting and adapting coursebooks based on student needs would be too idealistic for their future teaching practice. She was well aware of the curriculum constraints her students would very likely experience themselves as they started teaching. This example not only highlights the theory and practice concern in teacher education in the local context of Vietnam, but also problematises it, as in this case multiple levels of discrepancies could be observed. Specifically, these discrepancies were Teacher 4’s own experience of the lack of teaching autonomy, and the constraints that she foresaw her students would face as they started teaching in the future. Teacher 1 and 10, in the same vein, did not succeed in introducing new tools learnt from teacher training due to constraints in teaching facilities and restriction of time spent on non-curricular contents. These findings strongly align with those of previous studies with returned TESOL teachers (e.g., Chowdhury & Phan, 2014; Le & Phan, 2012; Pham, n.d.), which point out that teachers trained in the Inner Circle are likely to encounter difficulties translating what they knew and wanted to do in the classroom to their teaching practice.

Regarding teachers who attended localised programs, the mismatch between what they learnt in teacher training and what was applicable in everyday teaching lay in both contextual restrictions and a lack of contextualised teaching resources. For Teacher G it was the difficulty of incorporating content about non-native English varieties in her teaching, as many available textbooks were Anglocentric by nature. Quite similarly, Teacher B found it challenging to implement communicative teaching and testing of grammar due to a lack of support from his supervisor and insufficient access to materials dedicated to communicative grammar practice. What is worth noting is that teacher education courses did not seem to provide much assistance to their participants in terms of empowering them to “theorise from practice” (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p 541). It could
be because in both types of programs there was very few courses that cater to context-specific teaching issues (as pointed out in Section 4.3.2 of the thesis). This reality, therefore, calls into question the programs’ claim of adequately preparing their graduates for teaching in globally diverse contexts (as in the case of overseas programs), and the Vietnamese context in particular (as in the case of localised programs).

6.4.4. Teaching conditions and its impact on teacher autonomy
An interesting finding of this research is that the teachers’ teaching conditions has a significant bearing on their curriculum autonomy. In particular, teachers working at private institutions reported a higher degree of freedom in selecting course content and materials. The interview accounts point to the more commercialised nature of private institutions, which are supported financially by student fees. These institutions attached importance to a high student satisfaction level, and seemed to rely more on staff feedback on curricular issues to better meet student requirements. This finding supports Welch’s (2007) claim regarding the teaching and learning quality of private higher education institutions in Vietnam, that their curricula might at times be more receptive to actual industry needs than those of public institutions. As structural constraints are loosened, working in a private institution of this type might increase teachers’ chance of having their professional voice heard.

A caveat here is that although such practical consideration of industry needs might lead to regular curricular updates and therefore greater teacher autonomy, there is not sufficient evidence in this research to postulate that private institutions are better than public ones in terms of giving teachers freedom to make professional decisions. It seems that their practice of asking teachers to provide comments and suggestions on course content and learning materials were more revenue-oriented, rather than deriving from their genuine desire to give teachers freedom in decision-making. To illustrate, teacher suggestions on course content were less welcome for courses that were already designed and structured well and needed little revision. In this case, teachers were required to closely follow prescribed content, materials, and even teaching procedures, as Teacher F reported. Little teaching autonomy was thus observed in these situations.

6.4.5. The influence of teacher training on teacher autonomy
Whether the gap between what teachers desire to do and what they can do in reality can be bridged, as Benson (2010) suggests, depends partly on the extent to which they can
experiment with new ideas introduced in teacher training. In this sense, teacher education can be said to play an important role in enhancing teacher learners’ sense of professional autonomy. In the present research, the overseas training experience seems to influence the teachers’ teaching autonomy in two crucial ways. On the one hand, enhanced knowledge from teacher training appeared to have empowered the teachers to experiment with new teaching practices. They therefore became more creative and autonomous in their teaching approach, as also found in Benson’s (2010) study on the role that an MA English teacher training program played on the teaching of a group of Hong Kong teachers of English. On the other hand, in attempting to apply learnt teaching strategies and techniques, the participants’ awareness of the lack of teaching autonomy seemed to intensify as their applications of teaching ideas did not always succeed due to both contextual and personal constraints. This applies well to teachers who attended overseas programs. In fact, being in these programs led them to realise the differences in autonomy level between the Anglophone teaching and learning environments and their own. They therefore developed “disillusion” with their home context (Liyanage & Barlette, 2008, p. 1827), rather than becoming concerned about the applicability of overseas training. As such, in this research overseas teacher training can be seen to perform conflicting functions in impacting on teacher autonomy: it provides teachers with more pedagogical ideas toward exercising greater autonomy in teaching; at the same time, it gives them the opportunity to critically reflect on their own autonomy and realise all the constraints previously unknown to them as they stepped out of the teaching environment they had been very familiar with and thus saw it in a new light.

As for teachers taking localised programs who did not experience change in professional environment, it is evident that during teacher training they were given the opportunity to exercise their autonomy as learners, as demonstrated through their involvement in assessment of learning, as well as their perception of professional equality in comparison with their lecturers and other classmates. These examples support Little’s (1995) view of educating teachers in an autonomous manner in order to enhance their autonomy. The main drawback is that there were only two incidents (in the case of Teacher E and J), in which a lecturer of a localised program purposefully discussed with his teacher learners possible constraints they might face in their local teaching contexts, and assisted them in creating more spaces to exercise their autonomy. This may be because foreign TESOL educators in the surveyed overseas and localised programs might not have sufficient knowledge of the English teaching situations in the Vietnamese
context to hold discussions about teaching constraints. A similar finding has also been reported in Macalister (2011), who investigated New Zealand-based teacher trainers who were training a group of Malaysian preservice teachers, and found that the New Zealand educators mostly taught from their own perspective and experience, with little knowledge and experience of the Malaysian education system. While it would be unrealistic to require teacher trainers to have a profound knowledge of all the different contexts where their course participants come from, they could at least provide opportunities where teachers from similar contexts can share experience and learn from each other.

6.5. Summary
This chapter reports on the autonomy levels of Vietnamese teachers of English who took Master’s level training in TESOL in overseas and localised programs, as well as the extent to which this training influenced their teaching autonomy. The main findings were that:

- The teachers in both program types demonstrated a medium level of overall autonomy in their teaching, with the level of autonomy in general aspects of teaching (e.g., deciding on teaching methods and learning activities) being greater than that of curricular aspects of teaching (e.g., selecting learning content and materials).
- The teachers were faced with structural and individual constraints when they attempted to exercise their autonomy. They had most freedom in selecting teaching methods and learning activities and least freedom in deciding learning content and course assessment.
- The teacher education programs provided them with professional knowledge and ideas that they could use to innovate their teaching activities, and to a certain extent allowed them to be autonomous learners, but did not assist much in dealing with curricular constraints.
- The teaching context (public/private institutions) had a bearing on the teachers’ level of curriculum autonomy, as localised-trained teachers working at private institutions reported a higher level of curriculum autonomy than overseas-trained teachers, all of whom worked at public institutions. However, there was not enough evidence in the research to conclude that private institutions are better at giving their teachers freedom in making professional decisions than public institutions.
These results resonate with findings of previous research on teacher autonomy in relation to teacher training, and shed further light on the potential of teacher education in enhancing the teaching autonomy of their teacher learners.

Chapter 7

TEACHER WORK SATISFACTION: THE ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION

“Teaching: You laugh, you cry, and you work harder than you ever thought you could. Some days you’re trying to change the world and some days you’re just trying to make it through the day. Your wallet is empty, your heart is full, and your mind is packed with memories of students who have changed your life. Just another day in the classroom.”

Krizzy Venosdale, Teacher

7.1. Introduction

This research has so far investigated the post-training experience of Vietnamese TESOL teachers about two aspects of their professional lives, including their attitudes toward different facets of teaching English as an international language, and their autonomy in teaching practice. Examination of these issues has provided insights into the reality of teachers’ professional wellbeing at the cognitive and practice level, as well as reveals the
impact of teacher education on these aspects. This chapter will turn to reporting findings on a dimension of teachers’ professional experience that has a strong connection with both teachers’ attitudes and beliefs (their mental lives) and their teaching autonomy (their pedagogical practice), but deserves attention in and of itself, namely teacher work satisfaction.

Teacher work satisfaction, according to Pennington (1991), is the fit between teachers’ expectations, values, and desires they had for the teaching profession, and the reality of their work situation. This fit or discrepancy dictates whether or not a teacher is satisfied or dissatisfied with his/her job. Many factors have been postulated to constitute work satisfaction, including motivational factors that are intrinsic to the work itself such as achievements, recognition, and responsibility, and hygiene factors such as workplace conditions, salary, or supervision, which are external to the work of a job (Herzberg, 1976). Along the same lines, Dinham and Scott (1998) provide a description of work satisfaction for teachers specifically, consisting of three domains: intrinsic rewards of teaching; factors extrinsic to the school; and school-related factors. Intrinsic rewards are demonstrated in teachers’ positive emotions generated from their actual teaching and working with students, and their contentment in seeing students’ development and achievements. Factors extrinsic to the school comprise educational change, external school evaluation, and the general status of the teaching profession. School-based factors include, but are not limited to, relationship with colleagues, supervisors, and students, the school leadership, and time pressure (teachers’ assigned workload and whether they have time for rest and recovery). Against this background, in this chapter, teacher work satisfaction will be examined according to teachers’ perception of intrinsic and school-based factors that potentially influence their level of contentment about the teaching job.

Research on TESOL teachers’ work satisfaction has been scant. The most related work has been that of Pennington and Riley (1991a, 1991b) and Kassabgy, Boraie, and Schmidt (2001). Pennington and Riley (1991a) randomly surveyed 32 ESL teachers teaching at different levels, from elementary to university. These teachers were targeted as participants because of their membership in the TESOL International Organisation; 26 of them were working in the US or Puerto Rico at the time of the research, the rest were living outside the US. These teachers responded to the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ), a widely-used tool for measuring general job satisfaction. Results found that in general the respondents were moderately satisfied with their work. More particularly, they reported a high satisfaction level with the moral values and social
service aspects of ESL teaching, and were least satisfied with advancement opportunities, monetary compensation, and administrative policy and practices. Using a similar research design, Pennington and Riley (1991b) targeted another group of ESL practitioners who were also TESOL members, the majority of whom were also based in the US. In this research a Job Descriptive Index (JDI), another well-recognised instrument for measuring job satisfaction (see Pennington & Riley, 1991b), was distributed to 45 participants. These teachers were found to be highly satisfied with their work in general, but their satisfaction levels for individual aspects of the job varied. Interestingly, they were also more satisfied with intrinsic rewards of teaching such as working with students and see their development, rather than extrinsic aspects such as promotion prospects and their pay. Similarly, Kassabgy et al.’s (2001) investigation into the work satisfaction of 107 ESL/EFL teachers in Hawaii and Egypt revealed that the participants had more contentment about job intrinsic rewards (e.g., having a job that they can perform to the best of their ability, helping students to learn English, etc.), than on extrinsic motivation (i.e., salary, promotion prospects, or the ability to introduce changes without going through a lot of administrative procedure).

Additionally, educational research on teacher work satisfaction in general has revealed positive connections between several intrinsic aspects of teachers’ professional lives and their job satisfaction. For example, Veldman, van Tartwijk, Brekelmans, & Wubbels (2013) found that high quality relationships with students contributed to the high job satisfaction level of experienced Dutch secondary school teachers. Similarly, Wang, Hall, & Rahimi’s (2015) survey with teachers at different school levels in Canada showed that teachers’ self-efficacy, or their beliefs in their ability to teach effectively and encourage students’ learning, helped to decrease teacher stress and positively correlated with their work satisfaction.

Findings of these studies share one commonality that school-based conditions do not seem to contribute positively to TESOL teachers’ work satisfaction. It seems that inherent motivational characteristics of the job are what satisfy them and therefore keep them in the profession. This body of work, however, has been mostly done in an ESL setting, and did not take into consideration the role that undergoing teacher education might have on English teachers’ work satisfaction, especially in terms of possible changes (if any) in their relationship with their supervisors and colleagues after they returned to teach from training. Since work satisfaction has been reported to be one of the predictors of teacher attrition and retention (see Borman & Dowling, 2008, for a meta-analysis), it
is worthwhile to investigate the extent to which TESOL teachers’ work satisfaction is influenced by intrinsic and contextual factors that constitute their teaching conditions, and whether teacher education has any bearing on their work satisfaction level.

This part of the thesis will therefore report the findings of the third, and also final, set of research question:

3. What is the professional experience in post-training periods of overseas- and localised-trained teachers in terms of their work satisfaction? Specifically,

3.1. How satisfied are they with their teaching jobs?

3.2. How does prior teacher training experience have an influence on their work satisfaction?

The quantitative data reported in this chapter were extracted from Section 5 of the online questionnaire, which was adapted from Kassabgy et al.’s (2011) (see Appendix A). In this part of the survey, participants were asked to indicate their satisfaction with three main features of their working conditions (e.g., institutional support, professional position, and relationship with students, colleagues and supervisors), as well as intrinsic aspects of their work (e.g., seeing students’ development, opportunities for learning and self-developing, and the stimulating nature of the job), and their overall level of job satisfaction. The qualitative data were from semi-structured in-depth interviews with ten teachers from each program type. Where applicable, responses by teachers who attended the two types of teacher training programs will be discussed alongside each other.

7.2. Teachers who attended overseas programs

7.2.1. Overview of work satisfaction of overseas-trained teachers

Findings from the survey revealed a general trend in the satisfaction levels of teachers attending overseas programs regarding various aspects of their work. As shown in Table 7.1, the teachers seemed most satisfied with intrinsic rewards of the teaching job, with the contentment in their ability to help their students to learn English receiving the highest rating (item 1), followed by the nature of the job itself (diverse tasks and the stimulating and enjoyable characteristics of the work). In addition, the teachers appeared to value their relationship with their students and colleagues, as they reported a high level of satisfaction in these aspects (see the mean values for items 3, 4, 5 and 7).

<p>| Table 7.1. Overseas-trained teachers’ work satisfaction |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories with high satisfaction levels ((M&gt;4.0))</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Helping students to learn English</td>
<td>4.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Job providing sufficient variety in tasks/type of activity</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Relationships with colleagues</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Relationship with students</td>
<td>4.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Students’ positive evaluation</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Enjoyable and stimulating work</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Supervisor’s evaluation</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Job security</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories with low satisfaction levels ((M&lt;3.5))</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Inclusion in organisation’s goal-setting process</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Freedom to do what is necessary in own teaching in order to do a good job</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Recognition of teaching accomplishments</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Supervisor’s responsiveness to suggestions and grievances</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Prospects for promotion</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Rewarding of independence and initiative</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Salary</td>
<td>2.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Ability to introduce changes without going through a lot of red tape</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the other hand, there are three main work aspects that received low satisfaction levels. First, it was the teachers’ autonomy in different aspects of teaching (items 10 and 17). This finding strongly aligns with the low level of teaching autonomy reported in Chapter 6 of the thesis, especially with the teachers’ comments on restrictions they faced when implementing new teaching ideas and practice in their organisations. Second, they seemed barely satisfied with how their work effort was recognised (items 11 and 14). Third, overseas-trained teachers rated their satisfaction with hygiene aspects of their work such as pay and promotion prospects to be low (2.55 and 2.11 respectively).

In summary, it could be inferred from the quantitative data that whether or not the surveyed teachers were satisfied with their teaching job was partly determined by intrinsic features inherent in the teaching profession and the teachers themselves, and partly by their relationships with their students and colleagues. Extrinsic contextual factors that constitute their teaching situations such as the reward system, pay, or possibility of promotion did not seem to contribute to satisfaction. It is therefore not surprising that in a separate question that asked them to indicate their overall level of contentment with
their current employment, the teachers reported a medium rating of 3.46 out of 5. This suggests that they were particularly satisfied with certain aspects of their work, but were discontented about others. The sections that follow will present detailed findings on their satisfaction in each of these aspects.

7.2.2. Overseas-trained teachers’ satisfaction with institutional support

According to Kassabgy et al.’s (2011) factor analyses with aspects constituting TESOL teachers’ work satisfaction, institutional support refers to conditions that teachers receive in their organisation that facilitate their teaching, including the level of freedom they have in their teaching, their workload, and the clarity of institutional rules and procedures.

Figure 7.1 demonstrates that the teachers’ level of satisfaction with different types of support they had from their institutions were from a low (means < 2.5) to a moderate level (means were greater than 2.5 but less than 4.0). Most of the teachers’ dissatisfaction in this aspect of their work resulted from their institutions’ resistance to changes in teaching practice and the lack of appropriate rewards for teachers’ independence and initiative-taking. Much of this finding resonates with what was found in the previous chapter about teachers’ autonomy in teaching practice, so no further clarifications of this aspect of work satisfaction were sought in this part of the investigation.

![Graph showing satisfaction levels for different institutional support aspects](image)

**Figure 7.1.** Overseas-trained teachers’ satisfaction with institutional support

In the interview sessions with 10 teachers attending overseas programs, workload emerged as a major theme in their responses, among the facets of institutional support. The mean of 3.65 ($SD=0.67$) in the quantitative data indicates that in general a majority of the teachers were either dissatisfied or neutral about the amount of workload they were given. The interview data provide further illustrations for this claim, as all of the interviewees agreed that their workload, including their teaching and administration
responsibilities, was either heavy or very heavy. According to Teacher 7, due to a large number of student enrolments, on average each lecturer in her department was in charge of ten classes per semester, and taught at least twenty hours per week. That was not to mention their other tasks such as lesson planning, marking, proctoring exams, and doing administrative work. This teacher worked in a university of foreign languages, and remarked that while enrolments for other languages such as French and Russian were consistently low, and her colleagues in those departments taught fewer hours, the English Department always suffered from overcrowded classes and a lack of teaching staff. Additionally, Teacher 10 added that since the National Foreign Language Project was launched, she also took part in many projects that the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) assigned to her university, such as designing materials and tests for school students. As the amount of time given to these projects was often very short, Teacher 10 commented that it increased not just her workload but also her stress level: “They [MOET] would often give us only three to four months to design a whole set of materials or tests from scratch, which I think is unrealistic. They of course know very well that we have millions of other tasks to do as a university teacher, not just their projects. However, we teachers don’t often have a say in this, so we have to work really hard, even extra hours, to meet their deadlines” (Teacher 10). The heavy workload and lack of teaching autonomy might explain why the teachers were barely satisfied with the support they received from their institutions.

7.2.3. Overseas-trained teachers’ satisfaction with their professional position

Also based on Kassabgy et al. (2011), the teachers’ professional position includes extrinsic factors that determine their professional standing such as their salary and promotion prospects. As demonstrated in Table 7.1, the teachers were particularly dissatisfied with their pay, with an average satisfaction rating of 2.11. They were also not very positive about the promotion prospects of their work. Meanwhile, they seemed moderately satisfied with recognition of their teaching accomplishments, and inclusion in the goal-setting process of their institutions received medium ratings. Job security, however, was rated highly, obtaining a mean rating of 4.0.
The interview data provide insights into these ratings. First, the teachers’ low satisfaction level with their salary is not surprising, as in Vietnam teaching jobs have been unfavourably known for being low paid, especially with teachers of public institutions (see Duong, 2014; Do, 2011; Harris, 2012). According to a national report, teachers in Ho Chi Minh City, the biggest and most economically developed city in Vietnam, earn an average monthly income of about 3-3.5 million VND (about 144-168USD) (Harris, 2012). The teachers’ interview accounts clearly reflect this reality. As a relative young teacher with three years of teaching experience at the time of the interview, Teacher 1 stated that her dissatisfaction was derived from the fact that her low salary was not congruent with the large amount of effort and time she put in the job. “I teach long hours and always try to design and conduct good lessons, but the pay I receive every month can only support my very basic needs. I have to keep telling myself not to let this demotivate me”, she admitted. Teacher 10, while also sharing similar thinking on the pay rate, took a more positive attitude, claiming that it might be because it was her husband who was the main breadwinner of the family, not her: “I’m not happy with my salary, but I am okay, as luckily my husband can support our family well”. Teacher 5, on the other hand, had to deal with inadequate payment by teaching extra English classes outside of his teaching hours at university. This teacher was quite open about his after-hour teaching activity: “As IELTS and TOEFL are becoming popular among Vietnamese students, demand for practice courses for these tests also rises. I can earn a lot more teaching these courses than what I get monthly from the university”. Teacher 4 even ran her own private English centre, specialising in teaching English to both young and adult learners. These alternative teaching engagements appeared to be the teachers’ immediate solution for their low pay.

In terms of promotion prospects, the interviews revealed that the teachers’ low rating (M=2.55) surprisingly stemmed from their unwillingness to be in a supervisory
position. Teacher 4, who had twenty years of teaching experience and was the Head of an academic division of her department at the time of the research, said that she was not interested in being promoted. She acknowledged that the position might have made it easier for her opinions and voices to be heard, but many constraints still existed in the administrative system. She admitted the following reality: “Not all of my professional decisions are based on pedagogical principles. Sometimes I have to follow what has been previously decided even when I know it won’t be effective”. This teacher did not want to specify what these decisions were, for understandable reasons. On the other hand, younger teachers like Teachers 1, 3, and 10, who had between three to seven years of teaching experience, did not value their promotion prospects as they foresaw what it would be like if they were promoted. They did not think they would be able to make much impact on the rigid structure of their institutions, and therefore would rather be purely teaching practitioners than to involve in supervisory work. The teachers’ attitude toward prospects of promotion again highlights the rigid institutional governance system at public institutions in Vietnam.

Recognition of teaching accomplishments was another aspect in their professional standing that the teachers found dissatisfied. Teacher 6 talked of the lack of institutional involvement in evaluating and commending teaching achievements. At the university where she worked, there was no formal procedure in place for course and instructor evaluation. As a result, the university had very little information about their teachers’ teaching performance, let alone rewarding them for their teaching achievements. Teacher 8 echoed this point by expressing her concern that, even though she herself always tried to invest time and energy in her courses and did not think rewards were important, she felt that teachers should be more formally and frequently recognised for their good work. Additionally, Teacher 9 pointed out an interesting observation that since most teaching positions at public institutions in Vietnam were permanent, and the staff review process was often very simple and mainly procedural, many teachers might feel at ease and are not very motivated to perform better than they currently do. This could explain why the teachers rated their satisfaction level with job security quite high ($M=4.0$), but was not satisfied with how their teaching accomplishments were rewarded.
7.2.4. Overseas-trained teachers’ satisfaction with their relationships with supervisors, colleagues, and students

Figure 7.3 demonstrates the surveyed teachers’ satisfaction with their work relationships. It can be observed that overseas-trained teachers in the present research were most satisfied with their relationship with their colleagues, followed by that with their students, while they were least satisfied with their relationship with their supervisors.

![Bar chart showing teachers' satisfaction with work relationships](image)

**Figure 7.3.** Overseas-trained teachers’ satisfaction with work relationships

Regarding the relationship with supervisors, although the teachers were quite happy with their supervisors’ evaluation of their work ($M=4.08$), they seemed less content about the degree of supervisory guidance they received ($M=3.89$), and were least happy with the supervisors’ responsiveness to suggestions and grievances ($M=3.05$). It is therefore understandable that they rated their satisfaction with their relationship with supervisors at a medium level ($M=3.56$). Apart from these rating questions, given that the surveyed teachers returned to their workplace after teacher training, they were asked one more scenario-based question about their supervisor’s reactions upon their return from overseas training. A majority of them indicated very positive responses, such as they were welcome and given more important tasks than before, and their knowledge and skills were valued (see Figure 7.4).
During interviews, it was revealed that the teachers were appreciative of their supervisors’ acknowledgment of their gained knowledge and skills after they returned from overseas training. Teacher 7 remarked that after going back to her teaching, she was involved in a material development project that aimed to design textbooks for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) students at her university. She considered it a more important task, since it required expertise knowledge in curriculum design and development. “Since I was able to successfully apply what I had learnt about TESOL curriculum in Australia to complete the task, my supervisors had an even higher opinion of me and the training I received”, Teacher 7 reported. In the same vein, Teacher 3 recounted that during the first semester when she just returned from her training in the US, she was given the opportunity to be in charge of teaching courses on teaching methodology, which was her area of interest in TESOL. This teacher commented, “Before getting a Master’s degree I could only teach language skills courses. Now I still enjoy teaching Reading or Writing courses, but I prefer courses on aspects of teaching methodology such as testing and
assessment, or theories in second language teaching, as they allow me to put the TESOL theories I learnt into practice”. In summary, the interviewed teachers seemed satisfied with the kind of professional responsibilities they were assigned after their overseas training. Clearly, the training experience and the qualification helped to advance their professional status in the eyes of their workplace supervisors. Accordingly, the surveyed teachers were certain about their supervisors’ positive evaluation of their teaching ($M=4.08$).

Other aspects of their relationship with their supervisors, however, did not receive as high ratings. The teachers’ interview accounts further verify this. Concerning the lowest rating item, which was responsiveness to suggestions and grievances, the teachers were critical of their supervisors’ leadership, which did not allow much room for changes. Teacher 9 recalled an incident in which he repeatedly raised a suggestion to the Head of Department about introducing computer software to facilitate students’ learning of translation, but did not receive an adequate response. Despite being upset that his suggestion was not successful, this teacher later conceded that his supervisors might have been under pressure themselves as they had to work for a notoriously bureaucratic system. Teacher 6 who had had a similar experience made a remark that it was very challenging for those holding high positions at public universities in Vietnam to really force changes, as many of them could only play a limited role within the educational structure. These findings emphasise constraints in curriculum autonomy that the surveyed teachers face in their institutions, as reported in the preceding chapter on teacher autonomy.

Within the scope of work connections, teachers’ relationships with their colleagues seemed highly satisfying, achieving a rating of 4.35. Specifically, the interviewed teachers were positive that they were on good terms with many of their colleagues. Noticeably, the reason for this good relationship was because of personal than professional attributes. The teachers gave quite general comments about their collegial relationships: “I feel like I have very good friendship and good relationship with my colleagues” (Teacher 4), or “I get on well with many of my colleagues, but beyond that we don’t have any professional sharing or anything like that”. To probe for more teaching-related relationships, the teachers were asked a scenario-based question on how their colleagues reacted to their return from overseas training (see Figure 7.5). 71.7% of the surveyed teachers felt that their gained knowledge and skills were valued by their colleagues, and 58.5% specified that their colleagues welcomed them back and were eager for them to share this knowledge. 30.4% indicated that they received advice from
colleagues who had also studied abroad and returned to teach. Interestingly, teachers who have more teaching experience tended to take a more liberated attitude toward collegial relationships than those with less experience. Teacher 4 and 9, who both had almost 20 years of teaching experience, considered the teaching job a very independent one: “When I just returned nobody came to my classroom to observe me or to give me any comment. Actually it’s typical for the teaching job. You do your own business, very independently, so I didn’t see any kind of interference or dependence” (Teacher 4). They therefore were happy with their relationship with their colleagues, as long as they were on good terms with each other. Teachers with fewer years of teaching experience were also satisfied with this type of work relationship; however, some expressed that they found it easier to have teaching-related conversations with teachers who also had overseas training experience than those who did not. In Teacher 3’s case, she and some other overseas-trained teachers informally formed a group to share teaching advice: “When I started teaching again after training, I could exchange professional ideas more easily with colleagues who also studied abroad, especially those who graduated from the same university in Australia as I did. We often discussed many teaching issues, such as how practical a teaching idea or activity could be in our context”.

Figure 7.5. Colleagues’ reaction upon return (overseas-trained teachers)

On the other hand, three interviewed teachers reported less favourable attitudes from a number of their colleagues as they returned from overseas training. Teacher 2 said she observed no different reaction from most of her colleagues, as most of them were
more focused on teaching their own classes and completing their own work duties than interacting professionally with other teachers. More harshly, Teacher 8 recalled negative reactions: “There were some sceptical people who tried to show that they found my ideas very ordinary or even odd or too Western. They didn't care”. This teacher elaborated that she had been in situations where her enthusiasm to make contributions to enhancing the teaching quality of the institution was met with not just indifference but also disfavour. Markedly, the most common argument against her suggestions was that they were not practical (“too Western”) and would not work in the Vietnamese context which was under-resourced and where students often did not have an active learning style. Teacher 3 also reported a similar experience, albeit in a less obvious manner: “Some colleagues did not publicly say they didn’t like my idea, but I knew they were not convinced. However, they were not very open to discuss or try it out”. Such incidents deteriorated the relationship between these overseas-trained teachers and their colleagues, making it difficult for them to cooperate on professional grounds.

The teachers’ relationship with their students, however, seemed more straightforward. An average rating of 4.2 represents a high level of satisfaction. They were also confident that their students evaluated them positively ($M=4.15$). When asked to indicate more specific student reactions, 87% noticed that their students were aware that they had a higher degree from overseas, while 56.5% were able to observe differences in students’ attitudes when enrolling in their classes; that is to say, their students were excited to see improvements in their teaching (see Figure 7.6).

![Figure 7.6. Students’ reaction upon return (overseas-trained teachers)](image-url)
The interview responses offered further clarifications. Teacher 5 recalled that he was able to informally observe students’ excitement in learning in his classes as on many occasions they asked him about his study and life in Australia and how student life was different between the two countries. Teacher 8 still maintained contact with some of her students on social networking sites while she was studying overseas, and even then had noticed that they had greater expectations for her teaching quality: “Once a student wrote on my Facebook wall on Vietnamese Teachers’ Day that he wished me all the best for my studies and that he looked forward to new teaching ideas that I would bring with me when I went back and taught again”. This teacher therefore stated that studying for a higher degree did impact on how she was seen by her students.

To sum up, in terms of work relationships, overseas-trained teachers were greatly satisfied with their relationships with their students and colleagues, and were moderately content with their relationship with their supervisors. The interview data revealed that these high ratings were based on both personal and professional grounds. These levels of work satisfaction were apparently higher than those found in other aspects such as institutional support and professional standing, where considerable dissatisfaction was recorded. Let us now turn to presenting findings on more intrinsic features of teacher work satisfaction.

7.2.5. Overseas-trained teachers’ satisfaction with intrinsic aspects of the teaching job

In the main, overseas-trained teachers appeared satisfied with intrinsic aspects of their teaching jobs. As demonstrated in Figure 7.7, they were especially content about their ability to help students learn English, which obtains the highest mean rating of 4.62. This is followed by the variety in tasks and activities ($M=4.5$), and the enjoyable and stimulating characteristics of the job ($M=4.12$). The other two aspects, including ‘opportunities for contact with professionals in the field of English teaching’ and ‘scope to learn and develop abilities to full potential’ secured lower ratings of 3.97 and 3.75 respectively, signifying that the respondents were either ‘neutral’ or ‘generally satisfied’ with these job features.
In the teachers’ accounts on their satisfaction with intrinsic aspects of the teaching job, a prominent theme was their dedication to students’ learning. Teacher 4 was assertive that even though her salary was low and she had quite a heavy workload, it was the love of teaching that kept her motivated: “I love teaching. I love seeing the faces of students when they understand new things, and the happiness on their faces to study with me or to participate in my classes. That’s a very intrinsic type of motivation for my teaching job”. Teacher 6 also alluded to the idea of being able to help students improve their English skills and said she found joy in seeing students’ achievements: “I feel really happy when seeing my students write well in English as a result of attending my courses, or when they win an award or a scholarship to study abroad”. Teacher 1 even made light of her heavy workload and shared her thoughts: “Sometimes toward the end of a busy teaching day, I am really exhausted. However, being in the classroom and seeing my students eager to learn and practice their English gives me the energy to continue teaching”.

The interviewees were also positive about the enjoyability of their job, and the variety of tasks and activities that they were constantly involved in. Teacher 4 commented: “What I like about my job is that I don’t just teach but also get to interact with my students and colleagues, and do other professional work as well”. Teacher 9, who had received many research and conference grants, said that the English teaching job brought him many opportunities to travel abroad for studying and expanding his professional network. This made him feel that his hard work was rewarded. Another interviewee, Teacher 7, also acknowledged that the opportunity to study for a Master’s degree in an English-speaking country was beneficial and refreshing to her and added to
her work satisfaction: “After teaching for two years I started feeling that I had used up all my teaching ideas, and that I needed fresher perspectives. Therefore, the two-year study in America not just helped to enhance my professional knowledge and skills, but also was really refreshing to me”. Indeed, it was in this aspect of the teaching job that overseas training demonstrated a clear influence on the teachers’ work satisfaction.

Speaking of opportunities for contact with professionals in the English teaching field, and whether the job provides them scope to learn and develop their abilities to their full potential, the interviewees were appreciative of the professional development they had received, but thought they could benefit from more institutional, or even ministerial support. They all agreed that the main way for them to come into contact with professionals in the English teaching field was through professional development workshops and conferences; however, such events were not regular happenings in Vietnam. Teacher 3 noted that even though there were a large number of English teachers at all levels in Vietnam, the country did not have any major national, or even regional, English teaching organisation or conference that would give professionals an opportunity to meet and exchange knowledge and experience. Teacher 9 made an observation that many Vietnamese teachers of English tended to aim at attending regional ELT conferences such as CamTESOL or ThaiTESOL, rather than contributing at national level conferences. Their suggestions therefore were to encourage more professional cooperation and sharing among English teachers in different regions of the country.

To summarise, this section has thus far presented research findings on overseas-trained teachers’ satisfaction with many aspects of their work. The teachers were reported to be most satisfied with intrinsic aspects of the teaching job, and the relationships with their students, colleagues, and supervisors. They were less satisfied with aspects related to institutional support (e.g., autonomy given to teachers, recognition of teaching accomplishments), and professional standing (e.g., promotion and salary). Influence of overseas training seemed most evident in how the teachers were positively seen and welcomed by their supervisors, students, and colleagues when they returned, and how the overseas living and study experience added enjoyment and stimulation to their perception of the teaching job. The next section will be concerned with the work satisfaction level of teachers attending localised programs.
7.3. Teachers who attended localised programs

7.3.1. Overview of work satisfaction of localised-trained teachers

Table 7.2 represents the work satisfaction levels of teachers attending localised programs, which display some similarities and differences with those of overseas-trained teachers.

Table 7.2. Localised-trained teachers’ work satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories with high satisfaction levels (M&gt;4.0)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Relationship with students</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Job providing sufficient variety in tasks/type of activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Students’ positive evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Helping students to learn English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Supervisor’s responsiveness to suggestions and grievances</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Supervisor’s evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Fair treatment in the organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Enjoyable and stimulating work</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Supervisor’s clear guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Clear rules and procedures at work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Relationships with colleagues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories with low satisfaction levels (M&lt;3.5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. Scope to learn and develop abilities to full potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Salary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Prospects for promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Recognition of teaching accomplishments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Inclusion in organization’s goal-setting process</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Opportunities for contact with professionals in the field of English teaching</td>
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</table>

To begin with, like their overseas-trained colleagues, localised-trained teachers were also satisfied with intrinsic aspects of the teaching job such as the ability to help students learn and their relationships with students, colleagues, and supervisors. Their satisfaction levels, however, differ with regard to certain characteristics of workplace operation, including the clarity of rules and procedures at work and the leadership of their supervisors (see items 5, 7, 9, 10). These four items obtained high satisfaction ratings from localised-trained teachers, but were not rated highly by overseas-trained teaching practitioners. In fact, item 6, which is concerned with how responsive their supervisors were to their suggestions and grievances, was among the lowest rated items by teachers attending overseas programs, but treated highly by locally trained teachers. This difference in teacher satisfaction level with teaching conditions could be because most localised-trained teachers worked at privately owned institutions, whereas all overseas-trained participants taught at public institutions, where a more restrictive work system
was in play (details presented in Chapter 6). Another noticeable difference is in the rating of job security. While overseas-trained teachers were highly satisfied with the security of their job ($M=4.0$, $SD=0.35$), teachers attending localised programs seemed less content ($M=3.75$, $SD=0.42$).

Regarding categories with low satisfaction levels, localised-trained teachers were in agreement with their overseas-trained colleagues in some facets and differed in others. Both groups of teachers were least satisfied with their salary, prospects for promotion, recognition of teaching accomplishments, and the extent to which they were included in the goal-setting process of their organisations. Significantly, localised-trained teachers seemed more satisfied with their salary ($M=3.24$, $SD=0.57$) than overseas-trained colleagues ($M=2.11$, $SD=0.37$), even though both of these ratings are considered low. In terms of differences, some features of the workplace conditions that were given low satisfaction ratings by overseas-trained teachers, such as supervisor’s responsiveness to suggestions and grievances, rewarding of independence and initiative, and ability to introduce changes, received medium ratings by localised-trained teachers. Meanwhile, localised-trained teachers rated their satisfaction with professional development aspects, including the possibility to learn and develop their abilities to their full potential, and the opportunity to come into contact with professionals in the field of English teaching, to be lower than other aspects. There was, however, no item that receives a mean rating below 3.0. The general work satisfaction level of localised-trained teachers was 3.76, slightly higher than that of overseas-trained ones ($M=3.46$).

Taken together, these results suggest that, like their overseas-trained colleagues, localised-trained teachers were moderately satisfied with their work as an English teacher. The aspects that they found most satisfied with also have to do with intrinsic features of the teaching job and their work relationships. Additionally, they were pleased with certain characteristics of their workplace conditions, which was not the case for overseas-trained teachers. The least satisfied aspects, again, are concerned with extrinsic factors such as promotion, pay, and involvement in institutional goal-setting processes. There was, however, a difference regarding opportunities for professional development, which was given a low rating by localised-trained teachers, but obtained a medium rating by overseas-trained ones. In the subsequent sections, localised-trained teachers’ satisfaction levels with different aspects of their professional lives will be presented in detail.
7.3.2. Localised-trained teachers’ satisfaction with institutional support

As shown in Figure 7.8, teachers taking localised programs appeared relatively satisfied with support from their institutions. The most highly rated items were ‘clear rules and procedures at work’ and ‘fair treatment in the organisation’, while the lowest rated items pertained to whether or not their independence and initiative was adequately rewarded, and the manageability of their work load. Noticeably, in comparison with teachers attending overseas-programs, localised-trained teachers showed a higher level of satisfaction across all aspects of institutional support. The greatest discrepancies were in the areas of ‘rewarding’ and ‘ability to introduce changes’, where the differences in ratings between the two groups of teachers were 1.17 and 1.8 respectively. This, again, could be due to differences in teaching autonomy between the public and private working contexts, as discussed in Chapter 6 of the thesis.

![Figure 7.8. Teacher satisfaction with institutional support](image)

These above-analysed differences in teacher satisfaction are further explained by the interview accounts. In line with their high self-reported teaching autonomy levels (as presented in Chapter 6), the localised-trained teachers who worked at international schools or privately owned English language centers were quite satisfied with the amount of freedom they had in their teaching. Clearly, this added to their satisfaction with institutional support, as well as their work satisfaction in general.

Two other highly rated aspects frequently mentioned by the interviewees were clear rules and procedures at work and fair treatment in the organisation. Teachers B and
G who taught at international schools both stated that they found the assignment of courses to individual teachers by their organisations smoothly done: “The courses are assigned based on each teacher’s strengths and also preferences, so I am completely satisfied” (Teacher B). Similarly, Teacher F commented that in the language center where he worked, all teachers’ teaching plans had to be approved by the Head of each academic department at the beginning of each semester, so everything was made clear from the start. Regarding whether they were treated fairly by their institutions, the localised-trained teachers who taught at private institutions all expressed their contentment. Teacher H remarked that as a result of a clear teacher evaluation process, in which the courses and the instructional teachers were evaluated at the end of each semester, all teachers in her organisation were recognised and rewarded based on their teaching quality and achievements. Teacher F was also happy about such an evaluation system, as it helped to reduce pressure on newcomer teachers: “When I first started working here [the language institute], I was a fresh graduate, so I was afraid that I might have to teach whatever courses that were assigned to me. However, after the first month of traineeship, I received a high evaluation score from my students and direct supervisor, so after that I was able to select certain courses based on my preferences”. This teacher considered this a fair treatment as it was based on transparent teaching-related criteria.

When asked about the manageability of their workload, localised-trained teachers were generally satisfied. Those teaching at private institutions agreed that the amount of work they were given was manageable and within their expectations. Teacher E said, “I think no job is totally stress-free. There are times when I have a lot of work to do, for example when the end of a semester comes, but in general my workload is quite evenly distributed”. Teacher G echoed this point and added an interesting comment that her attitude toward her workload was partly influenced by the salary she received from the private institution where he worked: “I would consider myself a busy teacher. At times I feel overwhelmed by all the work I have to do. One of the reasons why I still think the workload is manageable is probably because I get paid accordingly”. This aspect of teacher work satisfaction will be explored in greater detail in subsequent sections of this chapter, when teacher salary is brought into focus.

On the other hand, localised-trained teachers working at public institutions, like overseas-trained ones, showed their slight dissatisfaction. They, however, were less vocal than their overseas-trained colleagues. Despite admitting that she constantly had to deal with a large amount of work, Teacher A considered this normal, reasoning that it was a
reality that all her other colleagues were also experiencing. Teacher J was also quite accepting of her work assignments: “The hardest part is probably finding time for marking, especially for Writing courses. But apart from that I think the workload is generally fine”.

7.3.3. Localised-trained teachers’ satisfaction with their professional position

Considering aspects of their professional position, localised-trained teachers were most satisfied with the recognition of their teaching accomplishments ($M=3.96$, $SD=0.67$), and were least satisfied with the possibility of being included in their organisations’ goal setting process ($M=3.1$, $SD=0.25$) and prospects for promotion ($M=3.21$, $SD=0.39$). Other aspects (salary and job security) obtained medium ratings ($M=3.41$ and $M=3.75$ respectively). Comparing with teachers taking overseas programs, the largest difference in rating was concerned with salary. The mean rating by localised-trained teachers was higher than that of overseas-trained ones by 1.3. The following paragraphs will report interview findings in order to illuminate these quantitative results.

![Figure 7.9. Teacher satisfaction with professional position](image)

First, in terms of financial rewards, it is not surprising that the teachers’ responses differed according to the characteristics of their workplaces. Six teachers of privately owned institutions expressed considerable contentment with their salary. They stated that the pay they received corresponded to the work and effort they put in the teaching job. Noticeably, they were happy because they could earn enough to support themselves and their families well without having to teach extra hours. In fact, only Teacher C and G had
additional weekend teaching jobs, and the other four did not. Even with Teacher C, her motivation for taking extra classes was not primarily because of payment, but because she wanted to work with young learners, as in her everyday teaching her students were all adults. Conversely, teachers working at public institutions, like overseas-trained teachers, found their salary unsatisfactory. All the four of them either did extra teaching hours, or held private tutoring sessions for better income. Teacher I even said that she once thought of looking for a position at a private institution so she would worry less about her salary. What held her back, ironically, was the reputation of her current organisation: “The pay is low, but at least I’m teaching at a so-called prestigious institution in the country. This reputation can help attract students to my extra hour classes”. Teacher I’s thinking is not uncommon, as it was also shared by Teacher A, who claimed that she had been invited to teach at many language institutes partly because of her position at her prestigious current university.

Another emerging theme in the localised-trained teachers’ interview accounts were their appreciation of how their teaching accomplishments were recognised, especially those working at private organisations. As previously reported, the teacher evaluation procedure implemented in many private institutions made it easier for teaching accomplishments to be timely and adequately rewarded. Teacher H shared her story of being awarded the ‘Teacher of the Year’ title at her institute, in honor of her high teaching evaluation scores and her students’ study achievements. Such practice, however, was absent in public institutions, according to Teachers A, D, I, J. Teacher I made a further comment that even though there was an evaluation and rewarding process at her university, it was generally done procedurally, and “almost everyone will be given a title, no matter how well or poor their teaching has been” (Teacher I).

Teachers of private institutions, nevertheless, were not satisfied with the possibility of their being included in institutional goal-setting processes. They reported that since private institutions were often founded by a group of investors who were also members of the management board, one of their key goals was income making. Teacher F elaborated, “For revenue-related goals, they definitely would not consult teachers, and other learning and teaching related goals are usually set out very clearly from the very beginning. So overall practicing teachers have very little say in the direction for development of the institute”. Also, according to this teacher, such a rigid managerial system leads to limited prospects for promotion for teachers: “All key positions are normally entitled to investors. There are only a few academic positions left, which are
often very competitive”. This explains why the teachers rated their satisfaction with promotion opportunities to be relatively low \( (M=2.55, SD=0.63) \).

These findings have thus far shown that for localised-trained teachers in this study, school-based factors such as institutional support played a part in contributing to their work satisfaction, particularly with teachers working at non-public organisations. Aspects of professional standing such as pay, promotion prospects, and inclusion in institutional goal-setting procedure, however, were found less satisfying.

7.3.4. Localised-trained teachers’ satisfaction with their relationships with supervisors, colleagues, and students

Similar to their overseas-trained colleagues, teachers taking localised programs were found to be particularly satisfied with their work relationships. As seen in Figure 7.10, their ratings for most of the survey items were 4.0 and above, with ‘relationship with students’ being given the highest rating \( (M=4.4, SD=0.26) \). There was also not much discrepancy in rating across items measuring teacher satisfaction with their supervisors, colleagues, and students. In comparison with overseas-trained teachers, the only difference was that localised-trained teachers seemed slightly more satisfied with their relationship with their supervisors. Ratings for relationships with students and colleagues were quite similar between the two groups of teachers.

![Figure 7.10. Teacher satisfaction with work relationships](image)

All ten localised-trained teachers who were interviewed showed a high level of contentment with their relationship with workplace supervisors. They found the amount
of supervisory guidance they had received appropriate. Teacher G recalled, “During my first six months teaching at [name of private organisation], I was under the supervision of a senior teacher who was very helpful and caring. She commented on my lesson plans and also observed my teaching and gave me constructive feedback. This made my transition into the new job much easier”. Teacher J who worked at a public university also agreed on the relevance of supervisors’ guidance, but at the same time commented that her satisfaction was partly because she liked the independent nature of university teaching, which did not require much guidance on the part of supervisors. The same applies for their satisfaction with supervisors’ evaluation of their teaching, especially after they returned from localised training. This was further supported in their responses to a survey question that asked them to indicate their supervisors’ reaction to their completion of a higher degree (see Figure 7.11). Like the overseas-trained teachers, a majority of the surveyed localised-trained teachers indicated that their gained knowledge and skills were valued by their supervisors. However, only about half of them reported that their supervisors welcomed and assigned them with more important work, while the corresponding number for overseas-trained teachers was 80%. This will be further clarified by the interview data.

![Figure 7.11. Supervisors’ reaction upon return](image)

According to interviews with localised-trained teachers, their higher degree was valued and their training was supported by their supervisors, but after training there was little change in the nature of their teaching assignment. All interviewed teachers
acknowledged that their supervisors were pleased with their studying for a higher degree in English teaching. Noticeably, the localised characteristics of the program seemed to influence supervisors’ evaluation. According to Teachers B, E, and H, their supervisors expressed a belief that further training in a localised program had provided them with better knowledge and skills (in comparison with a purely local one), thereby enhancing their teaching quality. For example, Teacher H said, “The principal of my school told me that I made a good decision when applying to a joint program, instead of a local one. She said the program design was good as there was cooperation between a Vietnamese and a foreign institution”. Teacher J of a public institution had a similar observation that her head of department was positive about improvements in her teaching as a result of a Master’s degree she earned from a localised program. This supervisor also had a high opinion of localised programs: “From what he said, if I can’t go abroad for training, such a localised program would be the best choice” (Teacher J). Other teachers were more straightforward in stating that, apart from concerns with program quality and improvement in teaching practice, they believed that their receiving a Master’s degree also made their supervisors happy as it enhanced the profiles of their teaching staff and made them “look good on paper” (Teacher D). Nonetheless, in terms of work assignments, localised-trained teachers, especially those teaching at private institutions, did not think there was any major change. Teacher C who taught at a language institute stated that her supervisors appreciated her teaching ability, but did not give her any different tasks: “My job is still mainly teaching the courses I’ve taught before. I would have liked to be involved in tasks such as test design or course development, but those are reserved for senior colleagues, most of them are native speakers”. In Teacher B’s case, as reported in Chapter 6, his suggestion on revising the grammar test at the international school where he worked was taken but not adequately addressed by his supervisors. The reason was because the school management did not think the change was necessary. It is therefore not surprising that localised-trained teachers were not very satisfied with their supervisors’ responsiveness to their suggestions and grievances ($M=3.35, SD=0.45$).

Relationship with colleagues was also an aspect where localised-trained teachers reported high satisfaction ($M=4.0$). Further examination into their perception of their colleagues’ reaction showed that 82.4% thought that their learnt knowledge and skills were valued by their colleagues. However, only one-third of those surveyed reported to be welcomed by their colleagues after they finished their training. Meanwhile, almost half of the teachers claimed that they could share experience in adapting back to the workplace.
environment with colleagues who also undertook training in localised programs (see Figure 7.12).

![Figure 7.12. Colleagues’ reaction upon return](image)

The interview findings revealed that localised-trained teachers had a good personal relationship with their colleagues, but few connections were observed in terms of professional exchanges among themselves. Teacher D reported that she did not feel much difference in her colleagues’ reaction after finishing her Master’s level training for two main reasons. First, it was because she did not actually leave her university while taking the program: “I only taught fewer classes. Most of the time I was still present at the university, so not many colleagues really noticed that I was studying for a higher degree”. Second, this teacher did not expect her colleagues to treat her any differently, claiming that taking further training was a common practice for teachers: “Many of my colleagues also have a Master’s degree, so we are quite the same, professionally speaking”. Speaking of professional sharing, the teachers wished there were more interaction among instructional teachers. Teacher C commented that in her institute there were ten English language teachers, but each of them did their job solitarily and only met once before the final exam to suggest revision contents to the head of an academic department: “Apart from that we did not have much teaching-related discussion” (Teacher C). The only exception was in the case of Teacher B, who said the mixture between native English-speaking teachers and Vietnamese teachers at his institution enabled very fruitful sharing and cooperation. He attributed this to the school
administrators’ effort to create an open professional community: “I think school leadership is important. The heads of the academic departments at my school are instrumental in bringing all the teachers together” (Teacher B).

Finally, their relationship with students was also positively rated by localised-trained teachers ($M=4.4$). They were found to be greatly satisfied with their students’ evaluation of their teaching ($M=4.15$). When probed on their students’ specific reactions, however, there was a marked difference between the two groups of teachers. Only nearly half of the localised-trained teachers indicated that their students noticed that they had a higher degree, compared with 87% for overseas-trained teachers. Additionally, just a third of them was able to observe that their students were excited to join their class (see Figure 7.13). According to localised-trained teachers, there were many factors that might have made it difficult for their students to recognise any changes in their professional qualification. Teacher I said that it could be because she was still teaching during her training and did not let her students know that she was studying for a higher degree. Teacher E commented that since she taught at a language institute where the majority of students were children and teenagers, they probably did not pay much attention to their teachers’ degrees. However, this did not seem to concern them: “I think what students care about more is whether I could give them effective lessons, than what qualifications I have”. Teacher I who worked at a public institution held a similar view: “There are quite a lot of teachers with an MA degree in my school. We earn respect from how we teach, not from the degrees.”

![Figure 7.13. Students’ reaction upon return](image)
To sum up, similar to their overseas-trained teachers, teachers of localised programs had a considerably high level of satisfaction with their work relationships, especially with their relationships with students. The localised degree did not seem to attract as much students’ attention as overseas training did, but the teachers were still satisfied as they attached greater importance to the quality of their teaching than to the degree itself. Meanwhile, there were certain aspects in their relationships with their colleagues and supervisors that were found less satisfied, including supervisors’ responsiveness to suggestions and grievances, and the lack of professional sharing among practising teachers. In this regard teachers attending both types of programs shared similarities, despite differences in the nature of their workplaces (private and public institutions).

7.3.5. Localised-trained teachers’ satisfaction with intrinsic aspects of the teaching job

Like their overseas-trained colleagues, teachers taking localised programs appeared generally satisfied with intrinsic aspects of their teaching job. They were most satisfied with the variety of tasks and types of activity, the possibility of helping students to learn English, as well as the enjoyable and stimulating nature of their work (see Figure 7.14). Localised-trained teachers, however, were less satisfied with the scope for learning and developing abilities and opportunities for contact with other professionals in the field than those who attended overseas programs.
Interviews with the teachers revealed their intrinsic motivation for the teaching job. They found they were most contented when they could provide their students with interesting and useful lessons and see them do well in their studies. Teacher E who often worked with young learners at a language institute described her feelings when her students progressed from only saying a few greetings in English to being able to carry out a conversation in the target language as a result of learning in her courses: “I mostly teach beginner learners. When they first come they barely know English. But at the end of a three-month course, many can do things in English such as labelling objects, understanding and responding to instructions, and even communicating in simple English with each other. Seeing that always makes me feel good about my work” (Teacher E). Likewise, Teacher D who worked with university students at a public institution took joy in helping her students find motivation in studying English. From her observation, many of them were not motivated enough to learn English as they did not see how they could use the language in their everyday lives. What Teacher D did then was trying to motivate her students by studying their interests and adjusting lesson topics and language tasks so that they were as relevant and intriguing to them as possible. This turned out to be well-received by her students. This teacher concluded, “My students’ increased learning motivation is in turn a great motivation for me to keep teaching”.

Additionally, localised-trained teachers were positive about the characteristics of their work. They attributed the enjoyable and stimulating nature of the teaching job to two main factors: the educational aspect and the highly interactive features of the work. First, the fact that they could deliver language lessons that give their learners an opportunity to use a different language to communicate their thoughts made the job meaningful. Teacher C remarked that one of her main goals in becoming a teacher was to educate younger generations. She stated, “When I teach English, I give my students one more useful tool to explore the world, broaden their views and be more knowledgeable”. In another vein, Teacher I revelled in the possibility of being able to learn as she was teaching: “I consider teaching a learning opportunity, because when teaching my students I am able to refine my understanding of the teaching content”. In this regard, the act of teaching is also educational for the teachers themselves. Second, the interactive nature of the teaching profession added to the teachers’ satisfaction. Apart from guiding students’ learning, interacting with students was an aspect that was highly valued by localised-
trained interviewees. Teacher B challenged a well-known thought that other professions might have for the teaching job: “Some people might think that it is boring if teachers have to repeat lessons, but I disagree. Although the content might be similar, my delivery is never the same, as different classes often require different modes of interaction”. Teacher E referred back to the relationship with students, and emphasised that her interaction with them strengthened their relationship, and therefore increased her satisfaction level for the work. She further elaborated: “I would say this [interacting with students] gives me a mental boost. As long as my students are eager to learn and seek guidance from me, I am willing to offer them any help I can”.

None of the localised-trained teachers who were interviewed, however, mentioned teacher training opportunities as a factor that enhanced their satisfaction with the teaching job, as did their overseas-trained colleagues. They simply considered studying for a higher degree a requirement that they had to meet. Their decision in attending localised programs, as briefly mentioned by their supervisors in section 7.2.4, was because of the belief that these joint programs would be of better quality than those offered by Vietnamese universities as they involved cooperation with an English-speaking institution. Also, the fact that all the localised-trained teachers had to bear the training costs themselves, while a majority of overseas-trained teachers were on different types of scholarships, might speak to lesser enjoyment for localised-trained ones.

Regarding opportunities for professional contact, teachers of localised programs appeared to be much less satisfied than overseas-trained ones ($M=3.02$, $SD=0.53$). A common view among the interviewees was that they did not have sufficient contact with other professionals in the field, including colleagues at other institutions, their lecturers in the teacher training programs, as well as other experts in the field. In one case, Teacher F stated that he barely had any connection with English teachers at other universities in his city, let alone across the country. Meanwhile, Teacher B was not satisfied with the amount of guidance he had from his lecturers in the localised program he attended. He explained that the distant mode of learning made it difficult for students to have a proper professional relationship with their instructors: “In each course we had face-to-face meetings for two weeks, and the rest of the course was distant learning. The two-week period was too short for us to get to know the lecturers”. Teacher J had a similar observation that after her Australian lecturers finished their teaching assignments in Vietnam, there was barely any contact between them and the students: “They did encourage us to email them if we had any question about the course, but I think very few
of us did, mainly because we didn’t feel comfortable. We were afraid that they might not even know who we were”. Teacher A reinforced this view by pointing out her desire for more professional guidance from the training program. This teacher said that he would have appreciated it if his lecturers in the localised MA courses had shared with students some directions and advice on professional conferences and meetings to attend or present. This teacher later was able to enrich his professional development experience by actively looking for conference opportunities himself, but he thought he might have been able to benefit more if expert guidance was given from the beginning.

In summary, like their overseas-trained colleagues, it was intrinsic aspects of the teaching job and their work relationships that contributed most positively to the work satisfaction of localised-trained teachers. The main difference in work satisfaction between localised and overseas-trained participants was concerned with institutional support, as localised-trained teachers seemed more satisfied than those attending overseas programs in this aspect, particularly with teachers of private institutions whose working conditions were reported to differ from those of public organisations. Pay and promotion aspects, not surprisingly, obtained lower satisfaction levels in both groups of teachers. The localised teacher training programs appeared influential in the sense that the joint degree seemed to have enhanced the teachers’ professional status, especially in the eyes of their workplace supervisors. The localised study experience, however, did not seem to add as much positivity to teacher perception of the teaching job as overseas training did with their teacher participants.

7.4. Discussion
This chapter examines the work satisfaction levels of overseas- and localised-trained TESOL teachers; it also aims to uncover the impact of teacher education on teacher perception of work satisfaction. The research findings reveal factors that have a close bearing on the teachers’ work satisfaction, as well as highlight instances where the impacts of teacher training were evident. This section will discuss these findings in relation to previous research on teacher work satisfaction.

7.4.1. Extrinsic and intrinsic work factors and their contribution to teacher work satisfaction
The current study found that both overseas- and localised-trained TESOL teachers had greater satisfaction with intrinsic aspects of their jobs such as the ability to help students
learn and the stimulating characteristics of the teaching profession, than with extrinsic job features such as institutional support and professional standing (e.g., salary or promotion prospects). These results are in accord with those of previous research on teacher work satisfaction in general (c.f. Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011; Veldmen et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2015), as well as with work satisfaction studies conducted specifically with TESOL teachers (see Pennington & Riley, 1991a, b; Kassabgy et al., 2001). Though not particularly new, such findings substantiate and add further empirical evidence to existing research findings on factors that contribute to the work satisfaction of TESOL teachers. The following paragraphs will discuss these factors in detail.

With regard to institutional support, this research reports low to medium levels of teacher satisfaction with various types of support they received from their educational organisations, among which the key factors are autonomy in teaching practice and workload manageability. First, the teachers’ low rated satisfaction with aspects of their professional autonomy, as has also been shown in Chapter 6 of the thesis, adds further verification to the correlational relationship between teacher autonomy and job satisfaction (Perie, Baker, & Whitener, 1997). It is evident from the present research that the lack of teaching autonomy (i.e., ability to introduce changes to teaching content, and sufficient freedom in teaching practice) resulted in low teacher satisfaction with institutional support. Second, regarding workload, it could be seen that teachers working for public institutions were less satisfied with the amount of work given to them than those of private institutions. Their report of themselves being overloaded with teaching-related tasks corroborates the remark of many public school teachers in developing contexts in earlier studies, who stated that “Teaching is a very demanding profession […] Teachers have little time for rest” (Gao & Xu, 2014, p. 161). Also in terms of teaching conditions, this finding highlights another gap in educational operation between public and private institutions in Vietnam. The heavy amount of workload that teachers of public institutions in this study had to bear could be due to the larger student enrolments in public institutions than private ones (Le & Ashwill, 2015; World Bank, 2008). Alternatively, it could be interpreted as the consequence of the lack of governmental funding that leads to limited expenses for teacher recruitment, resulting in teacher shortages (see World Bank, 2008).

In addition, the research finding that illuminated the role of payment in determining TESOL teacher work satisfaction is significant as it authenticates a notoriously well-known fact about teacher salary. Like ESL teachers in Pennington and
Riley (1991b) and Kassabgy et al. (2001) who were unsatisfied with the compensation they received for their work, many TESOL teachers of the present study had to do private tutoring or teach extra hours at language institutes to earn more income. This viewpoint aligns with Chinese English teachers at secondary level in Gao and Xu (2014), who had the same complaint about the low pay of a teaching job. It also speaks to the reality of low compensations in the teaching profession (Pennington, 1991). Teachers in general and TESOL teachers in particular, regardless of where they work, seem barely satisfied with monetary aspects of their job. One possible explanation of this is that because most teaching jobs are government-sponsored, the decision for salary increase for teachers is often a state-level one that requires multiple levels of negotiation among state departments (Meyer, 2011). In the case of Vietnam, teacher salaries are mainly drawn from a limited governmental budget that has to shoulder many other kinds of pertinent social spending (Duong, 2014). Therefore, it is not surprising that Vietnamese TESOL teachers in this research, especially those working at public institutions, were dissatisfied with their pay.

Given such inadequate compensation for their work, it was found in the present study that the factors that seemed to have kept TESOL teachers of the present study to stay in the profession were intrinsic aspects of the job such as the ability to help students learn, and the stimulating and enjoyable nature of the teaching job itself. This finding is strongly concurrent with Pennington and Riley’s (1991a) claim based on their teacher satisfaction survey that “those who work in the ESL profession, like other educators but unlike those who work in some other fields, do so for personal satisfactions that are generally not well compensated financially” (p. 50). Despite unsatisfying payment, the intrinsic reward of being able to observe students’ achievement and thus seeing the fruit of their hard work was motivating to teachers of the present study (see also Gao & Xu, 2014; Kassabgy et al., 2001, Wang et al., 2015). Also, the teachers’ positive perceptions of the nature of the teaching job were conducive to their work satisfaction. Adjectives with positive connotations such as ‘educational’, ‘interactive’, and ‘meaningful’ were frequently used by the participants as they commented on characteristics of their job. These encouraging findings are evident of teachers’ intrinsic motivation for teaching and its role in keeping teachers to remain in the profession (Sahlberg, 2010; Wang et al., 2015).
7.4.2. Relationship at work plays an important role in teacher work satisfaction

Apart from highlighting the role of intrinsic motivation in contributing to teacher work satisfaction, this research also foregrounds the extent to which the teachers’ relationships with their supervisors, colleagues, and students enhanced their level of job satisfaction. First, both overseas- and localised-trained teachers reported a reasonable degree of contentment with their supervisory support. Many found that they were better valued by their supervisors after they finished their teacher education programs. In the same way, a majority of the participants were happy with their relationship with their colleagues and considered them a satisfying part of their job. Finally, they reported to be most satisfied with their relationship with their students, and were content with their students’ evaluation of their teaching. These findings are significant in two aspects. First, they confirm that professional recognition, as demonstrated in positive evaluations by supervisors, colleagues, and students, are important to bringing about teacher work satisfaction (Pennington, 1991). Teachers of the present research apparently took into consideration what their supervisors, colleagues, and students thought of themselves and their teaching; and favourable evaluations from these parties in turn were sources of motivation for them. Second, these results provide support for the role of a positive social climate and social support in increasing teacher satisfaction levels (see Day et al., 2007, Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011, Veldman et al., 2013). Teaching, like many other professions, concerns multiple layers of human interactions. It is clear from findings from TESOL teachers of this study that good collegial relationships were conducive to their work satisfaction. Another possible interpretation which is based on the influence of the teachers’ cultural background is that social relationships are highly valued in Vietnamese workplaces (Tran, 1997), and relationships at work can sometimes cause occupational stress if they do not go well (Le, 2016).

Another noticeable finding with regard to work relationship is that even though they were for the most part satisfied with their relationship with their colleagues, most of the collegial relationships reported by teachers of the present research were at a personal rather than a professional level. They clearly felt a sense of belonging (Ryan & Deci, 2000) in the teacher community in their organisation; however, they admitted that not much professional collaboration was evident. Despite attaching importance to having a friendly work relationship, many participants considered teaching an isolated job where each teacher was in charge of his/her own teaching. Such a finding is concurrent with Pham (2001) and Vo and T. M. H. Nguyen (2010), who stated that teachers in Vietnam
tend to work in isolation from each other, rather than having a lot of professional sharing and cooperation. In fact, some of the interviewed teachers of the present study were aware of this reality and called for better teacher collaboration. Nevertheless, such recognition was not prevalent among the participants and needed more awareness from the teachers themselves to be turned into action.

7.4.3. The impact of teacher training programs on teacher work satisfaction

This research also uncovers the impact of attending overseas and localised TESOL teacher training programs on participants’ satisfaction with their teaching job. The most evident influence is found in their enhanced professional status, as these teachers reported to be valued more highly by their supervisors and colleagues as a result of their training, which in turn contributes to their work satisfaction. This finding again emphasises teachers’ desire for professional recognition (Pennington, 1991; Chowdhury & Phan, 2014), and its impact on their work satisfaction. At the same time, it confirms the role of qualifications in constructing teacher professional standing (Liyanage, Walker, & Singh, 2014) and teacher identity (Pennington & Richards, 2015). On the other hand, there were still instances in the teacher accounts that showed less positive influences of teacher training. In these cases, there was either a lack of adequate consideration of teachers’ professional training (e.g., work supervisors were satisfied mainly because a teacher’s higher degree enhanced the institution’s profile), or negative, stereotypical reactions of colleagues toward each other’s training (e.g., colleagues considered teaching ideas from overseas TESOL programs impractical for the Vietnamese context). For both of these instances, teacher training seemed to be taken at face value rather than sufficiently considered.

Moreover, in the case of teachers attending overseas TESOL programs, this kind of training was reported to give their participants opportunities to enrich their study and life experience. These fulfilments, in their turn, significantly added to the teachers’ work satisfaction, reflecting what was found in Macalister (2013) about the expectations that New Zealand-based teacher educators had for their Malaysian student teachers regarding what these trainees should take away from their New Zealand study:

“I want them to go away with a much broader view of the world. I want them to go back as more interesting people who bring their tastes of other cultures and other worlds into the classroom […] with them they had a sense of that richness, or sometimes even a slight exotic flavour teachers would bring to their classrooms
[...] with their anecdotes of another world, or another country, another life they’ve lived somewhere”. (p. 308)

In the present study, the “slightly exotic flavour” that came with studying in an overseas TESOL program was evident in the interview accounts with overseas-trained teachers.

Additionally, the overseas training experience appears to have given their participants more professional contact with other professionals in the field, as was also found with UK-trained teachers in Li and Edwards (2014). Specifically, overseas-trained teachers in the present study were motivated to attend ELT conferences and events through the guidance and recommendations of their course lecturers in overseas programs. These engagements helped to extend their professional activities beyond classroom teaching and institutional relationships (see Borg, 2014), thus adding to the enjoyment of their work as well as their work satisfaction. Teachers attending localised programs, however, reported having limited guidance in terms of professional development from their lecturers, both foreign visiting and Vietnamese ones. The joint nature of the localised programs seemed to have affected the nature of teaching and learning, as courses were often completed in a few days instead of extending over a semester like in most overseas programs. Therefore, most trainers in localised programs did not have much face-to-face contact with their students, making it difficult for any further professional development discussion to take place. As shown in findings of the present study, this lack of professional support adversely impacted on the teachers’ evaluations of the training program, and to a certain extent also on their work satisfaction.

7.5. Summary

This chapter reports on the work satisfaction levels of overseas- and localised-trained TESOL teachers, and the impact of training on their job contentment. The teachers’ level of satisfaction with their teaching job was found to vary depending on various aspects. They were most satisfied with intrinsic aspects of the job, and the relationships with their students, colleagues, and supervisors, and were less satisfied with aspects related to institutional support (e.g., autonomy given to teachers, recognition of teaching accomplishments), and professional standing (e.g., promotion and salary). Influence of teacher education seemed most evident in how the teachers were positively seen and welcomed by their supervisors, students, and colleagues when they returned, and, in the
case of overseas programs, was how the overseas living and study experience added enjoyment and stimulation to their perception of the teaching profession.

Chapter 8
CONCLUSION

“I am not a teacher, but an awakener.”
Robert Frost

In his most recent book on second language teacher education, Freeman (2016) emphasises the ‘isomorphic relationship’ in language teacher education, or the process of
teaching (language) teaching. In this relationship, the teacher learner plays multiple roles: s/he is a student in the language teacher education program, and a teacher in the language teaching classroom. His/her opinion on a particular topic, therefore, might vary depending on where s/he stands, or what role the teacher assumes in a specific situation. According to this conceptualisation, language teacher education, if seen from the perspective of teacher learners in training, will ‘look’ different from being seen from the perspective of teachers in their teaching practice. It is the latter that paves the way for a more descriptive view of SLTE, instead of teacher educators prescribing what language teachers should know and how they should conduct their teaching (Freeman, 2016). The present study took the second perspective and chose to elicit teachers’ viewpoints about their SLTE experience after they had completed their training and were playing the role of practising teachers in the English classroom. Multiple issues pertinent to the professional lives of these teachers were brought into play. This final chapter will summarise the key research findings, present an overall discussion, suggest implications for SLTE, as well as discuss the study’s limitations and point to directions for future research.

8.1. Summary of key findings

This research examined the professional experience of Vietnamese TESOL teachers who previously underwent professional training in two types of Master’s level TESOL programs: those offered by institutions of one of the Inner-Circle countries (e.g., USA, UK, Australia, New Zealand) in these countries (overseas programs), and programs offered by Inner-Circle institutions in association with a Vietnamese institution in Vietnam (localised programs). These programs were chosen as the research is situated in the context of TESOL becoming a globalised field, partly demonstrated in the mobility of teachers and teacher training programs. The impacts of previous TESOL training are investigated through three main lenses believed to encompass different current aspects of TESOL teachers’ professional experience, and which reflect the training content and aims of contemporary TESOL teacher education programs. The three lenses are teachers’ beliefs toward various issues related to the teaching of English as an International Language (TEIL); their autonomy in teaching practice; and their satisfaction with the teaching job. In each of these aspects, the study aims to address two main inquiries: 1) What are the teachers’ views/experiences?; and 2) How does teacher education impact on their views/experiences?.
In terms of teacher beliefs about aspects of TEIL, it was revealed that post-training, both overseas- and localised-trained teachers had an increased awareness of the pluricentric nature of English, the importance of teaching both Anglophone and non-Anglophone cultures, and of understanding the larger social, cultural, and political context of teaching. The study also found that teacher education programs played a significant role in modifying teacher beliefs, such as strengthening, disproving, and reconstructing existing beliefs, or shaping new beliefs. It also uncovered aspects of TEIL where teacher education could exert more impact, such as the construct of language teacher proficiency, and the risk of over-relying on Western teaching methodologies.

Regarding autonomy in teaching practice, teachers in both program types demonstrated a medium level of autonomy in their teaching, with the level of autonomy in general aspects of teaching (e.g., deciding on teaching methods and learning activities) being greater than that of curricular aspects (e.g., selecting learning content and materials). Noticeably, teacher education programs were found to provide them with professional knowledge and ideas that they could use to innovate their everyday teaching activities, and to a certain extent allowed them to be autonomous learners. However, they did not seem to provide teachers with much assistance in dealing with curricular constraints, nor inspire them to create spaces for more teaching autonomy.

Finally, the teachers’ level of satisfaction with their teaching job was found to vary depending on various aspects. They were most satisfied with intrinsic aspects of the job and the relationships with their students, colleagues, and supervisors, and were less satisfied with aspects related to institutional support (e.g., autonomy given to teachers, recognition of teaching accomplishments), and professional standing (e.g., promotion and salary). Influence of training seemed most evident in how the teachers were positively seen and welcomed by their supervisors, students, and colleagues when they returned, and, in the case of teachers taking overseas programs, how the overseas living and study experience added enjoyment and stimulation to their perception of the teaching profession.

8.2. Overall discussion of research findings

The above research findings display a mosaic of professional issues relevant to SLTE and a language teacher’s professional life. As detailed discussion about the teachers’ viewpoint on each aspect of their professional experience (i.e., beliefs about TEIL, autonomy in teaching practice, and work satisfaction) has been presented in Chapters 5,
6, and 7 of the thesis, this section will provide an overall discussion of common important factors emerging from the findings.

8.2.1. Overseas and localised programs: weighing the benefits

Findings of the present study show a high degree of similarity between the opinions and experience of overseas- and localised-trained teachers concerning the three researched issues. For example, there was not much discrepancy in their beliefs about TEIL. From the teachers’ interviewed accounts, both overseas and localised programs seemed to have equipped their students with a knowledge base about TEIL that facilitated their engagement with many surveyed aspects of the EIL view, such as an appreciation of different varieties of English and their associated cultures. Regarding their teaching autonomy, in both groups of teachers, there were instances where the teacher education programs were reported to provide teachers with useful teaching ideas to use in the classroom in addition to prescribed learning activities, thus exercising more autonomy. In terms of work satisfaction, commonalities were also found between both groups of teachers in that the teacher education experience contributed to enhancing their professional status, especially how they were seen by their supervisors, colleagues, and students.

In addition, differences in perceptions and experience between teachers attending the two program types were evident, some of which could be traced back to teacher education. Indeed, localised-trained teachers were found to be engaged better with some EIL views than their overseas-trained colleagues (e.g., appreciating different English varieties). Noticeably, they seemed more ready to question Anglophone-originated teaching methodology (e.g., Communicative Language Teaching) and advocated more strongly for a reliance on local knowledge and practice, whereas teachers attending overseas programs appeared more attached to the teaching methods and techniques they were taught in Inner-Circle TESOL programs (e.g., they were reluctant to critique CLT). Also, upon returning, overseas-trained teachers experienced more dissonance in applying the content of training to the context of their teaching and tended to develop disappointment with the home context, rather than questioning the applicability of Anglophone teacher education programs. Localised-trained teachers, on the other hand, perhaps because they underwent training in their home context, seemed to have more realistic expectations of their teacher education programs, thus experiencing less tension in terms of teaching autonomy. In another vein, teachers attending overseas programs
were found to be satisfied with their work as a result of going overseas for training and being immersed in a different linguistic and cultural environment. This experience, described as ‘refreshing’ by one of the overseas-trained teachers, was lacking in the account of teachers participating in localised programs.

The above comparisons and contrasts of the research findings with regard to the beliefs and experience of teachers trained in overseas and localised programs provide empirical evidence for the efficacy of both overseas and localised TESOL teacher education programs, thus calling into question the presumed superiority of overseas ones. Undergoing TESOL training in one of the Inner-Circle countries has been a top choice for many English teachers of Outer and Expanding Circle countries. Arguably, the reason for this lies predominantly in the desire to obtain an international education (see Chowdhury & Phan, 2014; Jenkins, 2017), or more specifically, the opportunity to be trained in an Anglophone environment. In fact, for many localised-trained teachers of the present study, the localised programs were a secondary option to them. They were attracted by the ‘joint’ and therefore ‘international’ nature of the localised programs, but would still have “preferred to be able to study abroad in an English-speaking country” (Teacher B). The findings of the present study, which showed that overseas and localised programs shared many commonalities in terms of their impacts on student’s beliefs, autonomy in teaching practice, and work satisfaction, and each type of program had its own strengths and weaknesses, call for a more balanced view of the effectiveness of both program types.

8.2.2. Public and private institutions: teaching context matters

Findings of the present study highlight the role of institutional characteristics in impacting on teachers’ professional experience, especially their teaching autonomy and level of work satisfaction. Specifically, teachers of public institutions tended to experience more curricular constraints than those of private institutions, who claimed that their teaching content was regularly revised to better suit learners’ needs. Accordingly, teachers working at private institutions reported greater satisfaction with their curriculum autonomy. Additionally, they were more content with the monetary compensation they received than their colleagues in public institutions. These findings confirm Johnson’s (2005, 2006) claim that there is a close-knit relationship between teacher practice and professional experience and the sociocultural and political context in which they operate. With reference to SLTE, Johnson (2006) then suggested, “Both the content and the
activities of L2 teacher education must take into account the social, political, economic, and cultural histories that are located in the contexts where L2 teachers learn and teach” (p. 235). In line with this suggestion, findings of the current research advocate that SLTE programs should consider the nature of the educational organisations where English teachers returned to (e.g, private vs public) as they plan their teaching content and curriculum. As Liyanage and Barlett (2008) argue, “If a home context would not change or cannot change, then how might a graduate’s new knowledge base change?” (p. 1835). This question will be briefly addressed in Section 8.3 of the chapter, where implications for the present study are drawn.

8.2.3. Mixed methods for researching language teacher education

With regard to the research methodology, the present study lends support to the value of using mixed methods as an approach to researching second language teacher education. In this research, this “third methodological movement” (Tashakkori & Teddie, 2003, p. 4) has allowed for a deeper and thicker description of various aspects of language teachers’ professional lives, including their beliefs, classroom practice, and work satisfaction. Indeed, the online questionnaire helped to obtain initial useful information about the teachers’ thinking and practice. The survey findings subsequently guided the design of interview questions. Interview results then reflected, supported, and further clarified participants’ responses in the questionnaire. Classroom observations also added vivid evidence and triangulated findings gathered from the two other sources, especially in relation to teachers’ classroom practices. It is through these complementary research paradigms and multiple research instruments that the teachers’ beliefs, instructional practice, and emotions (i.e., their work satisfaction) were revealed. In addition to encouraging language teachers to engage in classroom research (see Borg, 2011), researching language teachers using a range of different techniques and instruments that allow for the documenting of teacher experience from various angles seems effective in making teachers’ voices heard. In fact, some participants of the present study commented at the end of the interview sessions that they appreciated the opportunity of being asked about their learning and teaching experience: “It was nice talking with you [the researcher] and reflecting on my learning experience [in the overseas program]. After I finished my studies, I went home and started teaching again almost right away so there was no time to reflect on what I had learnt or wanted to do” (Teacher 3). Teacher B, on the other hand, revealed how completing the questionnaire helped him to think more
critically about what he had obtained from the TESOL teacher education program he attended: “When you [the researcher] asked about my teaching beliefs after training, and in the questionnaire the word ‘after’ is capitalised and bolded, it caught my attention. I had to think more carefully to see if my thinking was the same or different before and after training”. These examples are illustrative of the benefits of doing research with second language teachers. In taking part in research and sharing their thoughts and experiences via multiple sources of data collection, L2 teachers are given the opportunity to reflect on their professional learning (Farrell, 2015) and also gain a deeper understanding of their teaching.

8.3. Implications for TESOL

Given the findings that shed light on various aspects of teachers’ learning and experience as a result of teacher education, this research suggests significant implications for language teacher education and key stakeholders involved in the professional development of TESOL teachers.

8.3.1. Teacher education in the context of EIL

This research has important implications for teacher education in the current era of English being an international language. First, it urges TESOL teacher education programs to continue strengthening emphasis on EIL contents such as teachers’ awareness and appreciation of different English varieties and the teaching of various cultures in TEIL, as well as their criticality toward the native and non-native divide, thereby empowering teachers to become more liberated from traditional EFL/ESL thinking (Dogancay-Aktuna & Hardman, 2012; Kumaravadivelu, 2016; Matsuda, 2012). Second, this research recommends including critical discussions on teacher language proficiency as part of the learning content of MA TESOL programs. While language proficiency has been an important knowledge component of many pre-service English language teacher education programs (Richards, 1998), it does not seem to receive adequate attention in Master’s level teacher training courses. To contest against preference toward native-like proficiency, teacher learners should be involved in extended discussions on the complexity of language teacher proficiency. Specifically, they need to be made aware of various factors constituting language teacher proficiency. These factors are conceptualised as the construct of English-for-Teaching, which consists of three functional areas of teachers’ classroom language use, including managing the
classroom, understanding and delivering lesson content, and assessing students and giving feedback (see Freeman et al., 2015; Freeman, 2017). Emphasis should also be placed on paying equal attention to both oral and written proficiency (Kirkpatrick, 2014b). The goal is to make it clear to teachers that both native and non-native English teachers have equal chances at becoming proficient in the classroom language.

Regarding teaching methodology, the research findings speak to the essentiality and feasibility of a post method pedagogy (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, 2012) in conducting language teaching. Extended discussions on how language teachers can liberate their teaching from strictly following a certain method could be included as a learning activity in SLTE methods courses. Teacher learners should also be encouraged and given the opportunity to practice forming their own teaching theories based on their practice in teacher education or in their everyday teaching (O’Hanlon, 1993). Johnson (2015) demonstrated how teacher-generated theories could be formed collectively as she placed a group of preservice language teachers in a team-teaching assignment. In this research the trainees worked together to plan a lesson to teach a real ESL class; each of them then was in charge of demonstrating a part of the lesson in a practice session with the teacher educator before actual delivery. By working together to prepare for a lesson and receiving feedback from the teacher educator and their peers about their teaching, the teacher trainees developed significantly. They went from relating very minimally with the lesson content and delivery in the beginning stage (despite having learnt theories about teaching methods), to being able to negotiate the linguistic form to be taught and specific learning activities with their team members and the teacher educator. At the end of their teaching session, the trainees were also asked to retrospectively reflect on the whole experience and draw their own teaching theories (i.e., what worked well for them and what did not in the planning and execution stage of teaching). Such reflective and collaborative practice would be useful to both pre- and in-service teachers and should be encouraged in SLTE methods/practicum courses to strengthen teacher learners’ creative conceptualisation, adoption, and innovation of TESOL methodology.

Finally, the present study substantiates Matsuda and Friedrich’s (2011) call for a reconstruction of TESOL teacher education, so that there will be more programs based entirely on the EIL and WE perspectives. All the programs attended by teachers of the project were similar to those reported in Matsuda (2009), in that they included EIL issues merely as an extra content of the traditional curriculum, rather than foundational factors influencing all aspects of teaching and learning. This might explain why the participants
were able to identify with certain EIL issues, but still measured their language proficiency against native-speaker standards. Matsuda and Friedrich (2011) therefore suggest that a complete overhaul in curriculum design is needed for teacher education to exert a lasting and empowering impact on teacher learners, enabling them to readily disengage with the nativespeakerism in all aspects of English teaching and learning. This change in curriculum would also require teacher educators, particularly those of overseas programs which often enroll both native and non-native English teachers, to be open-minded and fully aware of their teaching practice so that they do not inadvertently widen the gap in power relations between native and non-native participants in their program.

8.3.2. Addressing teacher autonomy in teacher education

Taking into consideration the limited teaching autonomy of overseas- and localised-trained TESOL teachers in Vietnam, there are clear implications for the various stakeholders involved in TESOL professional development, in particular: (1) the designers and deliverers of TESOL programs; and (2) macro- and meso-level stakeholders whose decisions impact on TESOL teachers’ day-to-day practice, such as creators of educational policy and institutional supervisors. The following paragraphs will examine each of these in turn.

For TESOL teacher education programs to exert greater impact and empower teachers to thrive against constraints, it is suggested that they should be oriented toward a “pedagogy for autonomy” (Jiménez Raya & Viera, 2015, p. 5), whereby teacher learners are just not taught about learner autonomy, but also given the opportunity to experience it first-hand. To achieve this, Little (1995) recommends that teacher education courses conduct similar negotiation processes as those required for enhancing learner autonomy in the language classroom, such as involving teacher learners in determining course aims and course content, as well as in designing learning and assessment tasks. This will empower them to become reflective, autonomous professionals who are able to critically evaluate their teaching contexts and strive for their own and their students’ autonomy (Jiménez Raya & Viera, 2015). In the process of implementing this, emphasis should be placed on the role of teacher educators in ensuring a teacher education for teacher autonomy, as suggested by Kumaravadivelu (2006). Specifically, teacher educators should expand their thoughts beyond treating themselves as producers of knowledge and teacher learners as merely knowledge consumers, enable teachers to exercise their learner autonomy, and promote the ability to research with, rather than on, student teachers.
Interestingly, this has been carried out in an MA in English Language Studies and Methods program at the University of Warwick, UK (see Ushioda, Smith, Mann, & Brown, 2011). In this program, teacher learners were encouraged to exercise their learner autonomy by engaging in an action research cycle, in which they planned a lesson in pairs, taught it to a group of peers, and received feedback from their peers and a tutor. Each student then identified an aspect of their teaching that they wanted to improve and went off to research relevant literature that might help them address their teaching concern. After gaining more insights from research and expert advice, they conducted the lesson again and wrote a reflective essay on their teaching performance, focusing on what they had learnt from the experience and how it would assist with their future teaching. This process of giving teacher learners the opportunity to self-reflect and self-improve is undoubtedly conducive to enhancing their autonomy as learners, and could therefore be adopted by TESOL programs worldwide.

Each program type with its unique characteristics could also take different action toward greater autonomy for their course participants. Overseas TESOL programs would benefit from coming to grips with some of the pedagogical and institutional constraints which teacher learners will face after graduation, thereby further empowering their graduates to create more spaces for manoeuvre within these confines. One strategy is to implement the ‘pedagogy for autonomy’ approach mentioned earlier (Jiménez Raya & Viera, 2015), whereby teacher trainers foster critical discussion among trainees from various polities about possible structural and contextual constraints that returning teachers might face and have trainees jointly facilitate possible solutions as part of their course content and/or assessment. At the same time, localised programs could take better advantage of the fact that they were offering training in the teachers’ home contexts, and include in their curricula courses that specifically took into account characteristics of teaching and learning English in the Vietnamese context. If successfully done, this will undoubtedly contribute to bridging the gap between theory and practice in SLTE, which many of these programs initially promised to accomplish.

Second, findings from the present research point toward important external factors that invariably play a part in influencing the professional autonomy of TESOL teachers, potentially including their workplace supervisors and educational policy makers. Particularly, overseas- and localised-trained TESOL teachers’ enhanced knowledge and skills would be better utilised if their workplace supervisors or senior colleagues trusted them with important tasks of syllabus design and development, leaving aside other
objective factors such as age or experience. Indeed, existing research has shown that relatively junior staff might be able to work better with more senior staff if more attention is given to building trust among school members, so that the school becomes a trusting environment (see Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2012). In the same vein, policy makers could show more trust in universities and schools by removing strict control on teaching and learning at classroom level, and breaking away from considering standardised performances as the key to educational success (Jiménez Raya & Vieira, 2015). The reason is “autonomy is not a technical expertise, but a moral enterprise and democratic action in which trust is being built at many levels” (Jiménez Raya & Vieira, 2015, p. viii). Enhancing trust among teachers, therefore, is one vital step toward greater teacher autonomy.

Finally, as for TESOL teachers who had undergone MA-level training in both types of programs, it is important that they be able to look beyond constraints and become better aware of the spaces that can be created to promote their own teaching autonomy. They should also make good use of their overseas learning experience in support of their own autonomy building, and go beyond comparing their own teaching context with that of Inner-Circle environments, and rely on their internal capacity to create change. This might involve the ability to overcome cultural and personal constraints (e.g. fear of disrupting the harmony of the education system) in order to implement teaching practices that potentially foster their own and their students’ autonomy. To facilitate this, TESOL teachers can advantage themselves by working collaboratively following the community of practice (CoP) model of professional development (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In its most basic application, this model emphasises mutual collaboration between professionals who share similar interests. It has been adopted widely in various educational contexts and has shown to significantly enhance teacher learning, as well as make it easier for teachers to produce collective, influential voices regarding teaching innovations (see Laksov, Mann, & Dalgren, 2008).

8.3.3. Toward increased teacher work satisfaction
Concerning teacher work satisfaction, the present study revealed uplifting findings that most of the teacher participants were intrinsically motivated to continue staying in the profession, despite their low level of contentment in some other aspects of the job such as compensation, promotion prospects, and freedom in teaching practice. However, this
does not guarantee that teachers will always be able to keep their job satisfaction high (Pennington, 1991). As Kassabgy et al. (2001) stated:

“English language teachers are idealistic. However, just like anyone else, they will not be happy with a job or career that only fulfills their most idealistic needs. They also expect and demand respect, fairness, reasonable extrinsic rewards, and good management”. (p. 228)

Therefore, measures should be taken to increase TESOL teachers’ work satisfaction level by strengthening factors that positively contribute to teacher satisfaction and working on those that could demotivate them. In this regard, both SLTE programs and leaders/managers of language teaching programs where English teachers work can each make their contributions. The following paragraphs will outline these in turn.

To foster teacher work satisfaction when they return to their workplace, SLTE programs can encourage teacher learners to regularly collaborate with each other in a wide range of learning and practice teaching activities. K. Johnson’s (2015) implementation of ‘dialogic interactions’ between teacher learners and teacher educators, and among teacher learners (as explained in section 8.3.2) could again be an effective technique to promote collaboration among teacher learners. This useful professional habit, once it has been built up in teacher education, can potentially be upheld by teacher learners after they return to their workplace. Moreover, if the suggestions on increasing teacher autonomy proposed in section 8.3.2 are taken up by SLTE programs, it would significantly help to enhance teachers’ satisfaction with the level of freedom that they have in their teaching.

At the same time, leaders/managers of language programs where TESOL teachers work can play a key role in contributing to their teachers’ greater work satisfaction. Some useful measures that could be taken, as suggested by Pennington (1991) include: 1) conducting periodical job satisfaction surveys with teachers to better understand their level of contentment with the job; 2) creating diverse opportunities for teachers to experience job and role changes as they move up the career ladder; 3) fostering collaborative decision-making, especially with issues directly related to the outcome of teaching and learning; and 4) offering constant and timely administrative support to enhance teachers’ commitment to the work and involvement in the teaching community.
8.3.4. Maintaining professional contact with TESOL graduates after graduation

One of the hindrances toward evaluating the efficacy of SLTE is that after graduation SLTE programs often do not have much information about their alumni, who often go back home to their local teaching contexts or head toward different places upon completing their training. Details about what teacher graduates do and what kind of challenges they encounter in their everyday teaching in post-training periods can be valuable information for SLTE programs to assess the applicability and effectiveness of their courses. It is therefore beneficial for SLTE programs to maintain professional contact with their graduates through various means. One of the examples of successful contact with graduates by SLTE programs is Ushioda et al. (2011). Ushioda and her colleagues shared their experience in connecting with graduates of an MA TESOL program in the UK using a free online platform (http://www.ning.com/). Students who graduated within ten years from the time the project started were emailed and invited to join the online community. In this platform they were moderated by key alumni members, research assistants, and a teaching staff member. Past students were encouraged to share their teaching experiences, problems, and solutions in different interest groups. The project also involved current and prospective students, who were eager to interact with graduates to learn from their experiences. Such an innovative program has been proven to be successful in helping the SLTE program to garner valuable, timely, and detailed information about the effectiveness and applicability of their courses to students teaching in various contexts. This kind of interactive platform also allows for collection of more vivid data about teacher experience than what could be obtained via traditional follow-up post-training surveys. In this case, TESOL teachers also benefit from having the opportunity to continue learning and keep themselves updated with the latest teaching/research trends in the field, even long after they left the program.

8.4. Limitations and directions for future research

This section will focus on unpacking the limitations of the research by first pointing out what it is not before stating its limitations in terms of the methodology used and the covered scope. This will then give way to discussion on directions for future research.

8.4.1. What this research is not

One of the main aims of this research is comparing and contrasting the teaching beliefs and practices of Vietnamese TESOL teachers attending two types of SLTE program:
overseas and localised programs. Both of these program types were, either entirely or partially, based on Inner-Circle curricula. However, they were fundamentally different in terms of the kind of students they trained and the structure and delivery of courses (see Chapter 4). One might therefore argue that comparing the outcome of these two programs would be nearly as pointless as comparing an apple with an orange. Nonetheless, such is not the case for the present study. When data of teachers attending the two programs were compared, the most important aim was to explore the extent to which different types of programs might benefit teachers in their practice, basing on the fact that all these teachers were conducting their teaching in broadly similar macro environments. Indeed, they taught students who shared similar characteristics, and worked in institutions that shared somewhat comparable codes of practice. Also, the teachers participating in localised programs might have rated their learning experience differently if they had also had the opportunity to attend an overseas program; but the fact is that this rarely happens. As such, this research was confined to the actual experiences that teachers themselves had encountered.

This research is not a program evaluation study. To do so it would have been based on different frameworks and theories on program and curriculum evaluation. In eliciting teacher opinions on the impacts of teacher education on different aspects of their professional lives, the researcher was able to obtain information about the efficacy of SLTE programs, based on which some evaluations could have been inferred. However, the study did not aim to evaluate teacher education programs solely for the sake of program improvement. Its main goal was to explore program impact from the perspective of trained teachers and to make their voices heard.

8.4.2. Why not include purely local programs?
Another concern that might be raised is the exclusion of purely local or Vietnamese-based programs in the study, as these are still the most common type of Master’s level TESOL training that many Vietnamese English teachers can afford. The answer lies in the situation where this research is located: the context of TESOL becoming globalised, and in the case of SLTE, this is demonstrated in the mobility of teachers and teacher education programs. Purely local programs where there is less clear involvement of mobility in terms of teaching staff, students, and curriculum (see Phan, 2017) are therefore not in direct concern of the present study. This type of SLTE program, however, deserves an
investigation in and of itself. This argument will be revisited when directions for future research are suggested.

8.4.3. Limitations of the study and directions for future research

Regarding its scope, the present study focuses on exploring the beliefs and practices of teacher learners based entirely on accounts of their experiences before, during, and especially after SLTE. While this allows for an in-depth and focused investigation, there are other subjects involved in SLTE whose accounts might add interesting perspectives to looking at the impact of SLTE on teacher learners. They include teacher educators/program coordinators and language students who were taught by these teacher learners when they returned, with the former promising to provide illuminating data. Research has shown that the content and structure of MA TESOL programs is often influenced by pragmatic issues such as staff expertise and ideology, or how the program fits the university culture (e.g., the department and school where it is housed) (see Ramanathan, Davies & Schleppegrell, 2001). Given this, it would be worthwhile for researchers or designers of the surveyed TESOL programs to gain insight into their underlying intentions in program design, and inquire about the extent to which the inclusion/exclusion of certain courses is determined by practical concerns such as staff expertise or school culture, as well as how useful and applicable that they think the programs are to teacher learners.

Regarding the research methodology, even though the mixed methods approach enables the investigation of the teachers’ various aspects of professional experience from multiple angles, due to the retrospective nature of the study (teachers were asked to reflect on their learning experience to answer questions about impacts of teacher education program on their current practice), most of the employed research instruments relied on self-reported data. This renders a certain amount of subjectivity. Also, if the questionnaire had been piloted with a larger number of participants before being sent out to teachers, that would have strengthened the quality and validity of this instrument. In addition, there are certain thoughts that could not be retrieved by teacher learners as some had completed their training a number of years ago. For this reason, future research that explores the impact of SLTE on the beliefs/teaching autonomy/work satisfaction of teacher learners might be conducted in the form of a qualitative longitudinal study, which investigates a small number of teachers before, during, and after they take part in an MA TESOL
program. More objective data collection instruments could be employed, such as teaching observations, or teacher learners’ ongoing journal writing.

Moreover, another factor that needs to be taken into consideration when interpreting findings of the present study is that the differences between overseas and localised-trained teachers regarding their teaching beliefs, autonomy, and work satisfaction might not have always been associated with prior teacher education. In fact, that these teachers worked in different sectors (public vs private) might have also accounted for why they thought, taught, and perceived the teaching profession differently, alongside the different teacher education programs they attended. This therefore suggests that results of present research should be understood and interpreted in relation to the sociocultural contexts in which the teacher participants lived and worked.

Finally, there is room for future studies to explore the impact of purely local TESOL programs offered by Vietnamese institutions, using the same theoretical lenses and methods as those implemented in the current research. An investigation of these programs might reveal useful results on program design and course structure, along with the programs’ applicability. These findings about teachers attending local TESOL programs could then be compared with what was reported in the present study about the post-training experience of teachers participating in overseas and localised programs, casting further significant light on the SLTE landscape in Vietnam.

8.5. Researching and doing second language teacher education: a self-reflection

Throughout the process of conducting this study and upon its completion, I have found myself constantly reflecting on and embracing the multiple identities that I have adopted during my not-so-long but eventful career of teaching English (as a foreign language then and now as an international language). I started as an English teacher to language students. After receiving a Master’s degree in TESOL, I was qualified to work as a teacher educator to pre-service English teachers. And ever since I embarked on this PhD journey, I have (perhaps subconsciously) assumed for myself the identity of a second language teacher education researcher. It is this third identity that has had a tremendous influence on my professional perceptions. I strongly identify with Armstrong’s (2001) statement on becoming an educational researcher:
“Education research may also be *educational*, and that *being* a researcher is not a job, not a role, not a status, nor a state of *being*, but a praxis, and a strategy and process for lifelong learning itself”.

More than anyone else, I see myself as the first to benefit from findings of the present research, as well as from the knowledge and experience I have gained from doing research in SLTE. Indeed, it seems certain to me that I would be a different teacher educator from what I used to be as a result of this research experience. I aspire to become the teacher educator who would pay close attention to teachers’ prior and existing beliefs during training, allow teacher learners to be autonomous in their learning, be aware of the different contexts that they might return to after graduation, be able to cultivate in them intrinsic satisfaction with the English teaching job, and ultimately, be “the awakener” type of educator who is able to give teacher learners “a little prod behind” and they “jump to the skies” (to use Robert Frost’s words).

8.6. Concluding remarks

The present study investigates the beliefs and practice of Vietnamese TESOL English teachers with central reference to the teacher education programs they attended. The findings shed light on various types and levels of impact that SLTE has on their teacher learners, thereby contributing to existing literature on the efficacy of SLTE, and advancing current understandings of strengths and weaknesses of contemporary SLTE, especially areas where teacher education could exert more influence. Additionally, as it is situated in the context of TESOL becoming a globalised field, the teacher education programs under survey (overseas and localised programs) constitute key forces for educating English teachers not only in the context of Vietnam but also across the world. The research findings therefore can be translatable to other Expanding/Outer Circle contexts with comparable English teaching and learning situations.
REFERENCES


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REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

Dear Colleague,

This questionnaire is part of a PhD research project which aims to explore the impacts of TESOL teacher education programs on the professional practice of Vietnamese teachers of English. In this research the types of program we look at are those offered by institutions of one of the English-speaking countries (e.g., USA, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand) either in these countries or in Vietnam.

If you are a Vietnamese teacher of English who attended one of these TESOL programs at Master’s level, and are now back to your teaching, please help us by answering the following questions concerning your beliefs about teaching English and your current teaching experience. This is not a test so there is no “right” or “wrong” answer and you remain anonymous. Thank you very much for your help.

PART 1. ABOUT YOURSELF

*Please provide some information about your educational and working experience. This information will be kept strictly confidential and will be used for research purposes only.*

Your age:
............................................................................................................................................

Gender:
............................................................................................................................................

Years of teaching experience:
............................................................................................................................................

Current workplace:
.............................................................................................................................................
Current position held in your workplace (if any):
............................................................................................................................................

Place where you studied for your Master’s degree or diploma in TESOL:

Institution and location of campus (1)
.................................................................................................................................................

Study period from ………… to .................................................................................................................................................

Title of degree:
.................................................................................................................................................

If you hold or are studying for a higher degree (e.g., a doctoral degree), please add your details here.

Institution and location of campus (2)
.................................................................................................................................................

Study period from ………… to .................................................................................................................................................

Title of degree:
.................................................................................................................................................

PART 2. YOUR BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING ENGLISH
Please read each statement and decide if you: 1) strongly disagree, 2) disagree, 3) neither agree nor disagree, 4) agree, 5) strongly agree. Respond according to what you believe, not necessarily what you do.

* Please note that in this survey ‘native English-speaking countries’ refers to countries where English is the native language, including USA, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand; and ‘non-native English-speaking countries’ refers to countries where English is spoken as a second or foreign language, such as Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beliefs about teaching English</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A good understanding of the educational, social, and cultural contexts of teaching is important to English teachers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. English teachers should have native-like English proficiency.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. An understanding and appreciation of different varieties of English is not necessary to English teachers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Students need to be taught the cultures of non-native English-speaking countries in order to communicate well in English.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Native English speakers are better English teachers than non-native ones.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The choice of English teaching methodology should be mostly based on the models generated from traditional English-speaking countries (e.g., Communicative language teaching).</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PART 3. ABOUT YOUR CLASSROOM TEACHING REALITIES
Please respond according to what you actually do in your teaching, rather than what you believe you should do.

AFTER getting a higher degree in TESOL
### PART 4: ABOUT YOUR WORK SATISFACTION

Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following aspects of your current teaching job.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. In my teaching, I use my own guidelines and procedures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. I have little say over the content and skills that are selected for teaching.</td>
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<td>9. My teaching focuses on those goals and objectives I select myself.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. The materials I use in my class are chosen for the most part by me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. I am free to be creative in my teaching approach.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. The selection of student-learning activities in my class is under my control.</td>
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<td>13. The scheduling of use of time in my classroom is under my control.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. I have limited control over how classroom space is used.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. I select the teaching methods and strategies I use with my students.</td>
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<td>16. The evaluation and assessment activities used in my class are selected by others.</td>
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<td>17. I have the freedom to set expectations for student learning.</td>
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<td>18. The extent that you are treated fairly in the organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. The manageability of your work load</td>
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<td>20. The clarity of rules and procedures at work</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. Your ability to introduce changes without going through a lot of red tape</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. The freedom to do what is necessary in teaching in order to do a good job</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. The rewarding of independence and initiative</td>
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<td>24. Prospects for promotion</td>
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<tr>
<td>25. Salary</td>
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<tr>
<td>26. Recognition of teaching achievements</td>
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<tr>
<td>27. Job security</td>
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<tr>
<td>28. The extent that you are included in your organisation’s goal-setting process</td>
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<tr>
<td>29. Relationship with your students</td>
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<tr>
<td>30. Relationship with your colleagues</td>
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<tr>
<td>31. Your students’ evaluation of your teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>32. The extent that your supervisor is responsive to your suggestions and grievances</td>
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<tr>
<td>33. Relationship with your supervisor(s)</td>
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<td>34. The extent that your supervisor gives clear guidance</td>
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<tr>
<td>35. Your supervisor’s evaluation of your teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>36. Opportunities for contact with professionals in the field of English teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>37. The extent that your job provides scope to learn and develop your abilities to your full potential</td>
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<tr>
<td>38. Variety in tasks/type of activity in the job</td>
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<tr>
<td>39. The extent that your job is enjoyable and stimulating</td>
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<tr>
<td>40. Your ability to help your students to learn English</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the following questions, please choose options that apply most to you. You can choose more than one option.

41. **Upon returning to teach after finishing your higher degree, how would you describe how your supervisors (or persons in charge of work distribution in your workplace) generally reacted? You can choose more than one option.**
   a. They welcomed me back and gave me more important tasks than before.
   b. They treated me as no difference than before I got my higher degree.
   c. They did not seem to value the knowledge and skills I gained.
d. Others (please specify): ........................................................................................................

42. Upon returning to teach after finishing your higher degree, how would you describe how your colleagues generally reacted? You can choose more than one option.
   a. They welcomed me back and were interested for me to share the new knowledge and skills I gained.
   b. They did not show much interest in the knowledge and skills I gained.
   c. Some who had the same experience shared with me useful tips on how to adapt back to the workplace environment.
   d. Others (please specify): ........................................................................................................

43. Upon returning to teach after finishing your higher degree, how would you describe how your students generally reacted? You can choose more than one option.
   a. They were excited to join my class and expected to see new things in my teaching.
   b. I did not see much difference in my students’ reactions.
   c. They did not seem to notice the fact that I just returned with a higher degree.
   d. Others (please specify): ........................................................................................................

Thank you very much for completing the questionnaire. If you are interested in taking part in a follow-up interview, please provide your email here........................................

Thank you for your kind support!

---

APPENDIX B

EXAMPLES OF INDIVIDUALISED INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

Interview schedule for Teacher A (localised-trained)

About teaching beliefs

1. In your survey responses, you ‘NEITHER AGREED NOR DISAGREED’ with this statement:
   English teachers should have native-like English proficiency.
   Can you clarify your view in this matter?

2. You DISAGREED with these statements:
   The choice of English teaching methodology should be mostly based on the models generated from traditional English-speaking countries (e.g., Communicative language teaching).
   Can you please explain your choice? Please give an example from your teaching practice to illustrate your point.
3. Can you please give an example of a significant change in teaching beliefs that you have as a result of studying in the teacher education program?

4. To what extent do you find the TESOL program you attended practical and helpful to your teaching practice? Were the courses properly designed to meet the needs of Vietnamese teachers teaching English in Vietnam?

**About classroom teaching realities**

5. From your survey responses, it seems that you have more freedom in teaching in terms of methods, materials, assessment practice, etc. after attending the TESOL program, to what extent do the knowledge and skills you have gained from the program help you to be autonomous?

6. You AGREED with this statement:

   *I am free to be creative in my teaching approach.*

Can you please give an example of a new idea you learnt from the training program and used in your teaching? Did you find it useful for your students?

7. You AGREED with this statement:

   *I have little say over the content and skills that are selected for teaching.*

Can you give some examples of these restrictions? What have you done to overcome them?

**About work satisfaction**

8. You were most satisfied with your ‘*ability to help students learn*’. Can you explain why?

9. You were least satisfied with ‘opportunities for contact with professionals in the field of English teaching’. Can you explain why?

10. Does attending the teacher education program influence your satisfaction with your job? If yes, how?
Interview schedule for Teacher 1 (overseas-trained)

About teaching beliefs

1. You strongly agreed with the following statement:  
*Students need to be taught the cultures of both native and non-native English-speaking countries in order to communicate well in English.*  
Can you explain why?

2. To what extent does the training program you attended help shape your beliefs about teaching and learning English (as indicated in your questionnaire answers)? Is there a difference in your teaching beliefs before and after you attended the training program?

3. In your opinion, who should be responsible if English teachers from developing countries fail to apply what they were taught in TESOL training programs to their own context?

About classroom teaching realities
4. How would you describe your first year adapting back to the teaching environment in your workplace after finishing your higher degree? Can you describe one particularly good experience during that time and one particularly bad one?

5. How much freedom do you generally have in your teaching now? Does that level of freedom differ now compared to before you had a higher degree?

6. Can you recall any recent incident when you were faced with constraints in your teaching in terms of curriculum, material design, classroom assessment, etc.? What did you do then?

**About work satisfaction**

7. Does obtaining a higher degree from [name of TESOL program] enhance your career prospects? If yes, in what ways? If no, why?

8. Can you describe an experience in which you felt studying TESOL in an English speaking country is particularly useful?

9. What is the biggest benefit and disadvantage of studying TESOL in English-speaking countries, in your opinion?

**APPENDIX C**

**OBSERVATIONAL PROTOCOL**

**Teacher:**

.............................................................................................................................................

**Class**

**Hours:**

.............................................................................................................................................

**Topic:**

.............................................................................................................................................

**Aims**

.............................................................................................................................................

**Lesson:**

.............................................................................................................................................
The observer identifies the absence/presence of teaching autonomy using the below table as a guideline (based on Pearson and Hall’s (1993) conceptualisation of general and curriculum autonomy). Detailed descriptions should be provided for each autonomy-related incident.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher’s activities</th>
<th>Students’ activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher uses her own guidelines in teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher decides content and skills taught</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher selects course/lesson goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher selects own materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher uses creative approaches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher selects student learning activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher manages timing of lesson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher selects teaching methods and strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher designs assessment activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher sets expectations for students’ learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**APPENDIX D**

**RESTROSPECTIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHER 4**

1. From my observation, your students were very active to participate in class activities - you also gave them points for good participation and encouraged them many times
during the class to freely express their opinions.

--> What is your motivation for giving students bonus points for participation? Has this focus on engaging students and encouraging their participation been your regular practice ever since you started teaching, or did the Master's program in the US have any influence?

2. Even though the class was quite a large one, you managed to make students work collaboratively by pairing them up or using different numbering techniques to group them together.

--> Is this one of your solutions to the issue of having large classes? Do you always find this technique helpful?

* In the application exercise toward the end of the class, each student was given a number to work on different aspects of textbook evaluation, but afterwards you did not ask them to get together for discussion.

--> Was it because of space and time constraint? Or did you have a different purpose for that activity other than encouraging group work?

3. In the application exercise, you emphasised that the students should be as critical as they could in evaluating the textbooks they had; you also repeated this point a few times while the students were working.

--> What was your motivation for this practice? Why do you find it important to encourage students to exercise their critical thinking? Does this have anything to do with your own experience in being an MA student in the US?

4. You concluded the lesson by giving a recap that language teachers should be 'critical', 'practical', and 'flexible' when evaluating textbooks. I have the impression that these three important principles are also very much reflected in your own teaching practice.

--> Did you deliberately direct your teaching toward these principles, or did it just come naturally?