

PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICE OF “INNOVATION” OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN UNIVERSITIES IN VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT:

INNOVATION PLAYS THE CRITICAL ROLE AND BRINGS MANY BENEFITS TO THE EDUCATION CONTEXT. LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND TEACHING ARE CHANGING CONTINUOUSLY AND THE TRADITIONAL METHODS ARE REPLACED BY NEWER EDUCATION NOTIONS. MOREOVER, INNOVATION IN ENGLISH TEACHING HAS BECOME A MAJOR ‘GROWTH AREA’. THEREFORE, TO ADAPT WITH THE NEW SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES, TEACHERS’ INNOVATION MUST BE DEVELOPED. THIS STUDY IS DONE TO UNDERSTAND PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICE IN INNOVATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS AT UNIVERSITIES IN HO CHI MINH CITY (VIETNAM). TO ESTABLISH FOUNDATIONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION FORMULATION FOR TEACHERS’ INNOVATIVE SKILLS, THE COMBINED SECONDARY AND PRIMARY DATA ARE USED TO REACH STUDY OBJECTIVES. THE SECONDARY DATA IS GAINED THROUGH THE SYSTEMATIC AND CONTENT ANALYSES FROM PUBLISHED PAPERS OF DIFFERENT SOURCES, AND THE PRIMARY DATA IS GENERATED THROUGH ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE/ SURVEYS, SEMI-STRUCTURED TALKS AND INTERVIEWS WITH ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS.

KEYWORDS: INNOVATION, PERCEPTIONS, PRACTICE, ENGLISH (LANGUAGE) TEACHER(S), VIETNAM, UNIVERSITY (UNIVERSITIES).

INTRODUCTION

English becomes a national and international medium of oral communication and plays the important role in educational system and in the life². In addition, Scrase³ states English is not only the language of modernization and industrialization but that of globalization as well.

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² Chukwuma, Helena & Otagburuagu, Emeka, *English for academic purposes*. Ibadan AFP Africana-FEP Publishers, 1977.

³ Scrase, Timothy, J., “The Hegemony of English in India” In *English as the Global Language: Perspectives and Implications* Edited by S. Rajagopalan (175-196) Hyderabad, India: The Icfai University Press, 2004.

Teaching is complex and demanding work to meet the high requirements of specialized skills and knowledge to impact significantly on student learning⁴. Language education and teaching is changing continuously, for the newer education notions have been built up and altered for the old and traditional methods. They are more innovative ways for teaching what and how and for assessing learning⁵. In a special way, teachers play a fundamental role in learners' learning and academic achievement⁶. This is really important and practical with English teaching. The outcome with effective and efficient learning of students mostly depends on teachers and the activities they organize in classes⁷. The methods that teachers behave and exploit in their teaching, to a large extent, depend on their perceptions of effective teaching and their beliefs about teacher efficacy⁸. As a result, the teachers have to improve the quality of their teaching to meet students' needs.

In Vietnam, with the effect of the globalization and integration to the international communities such as World Trade Organization (WTO), Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), ASEAN Economics Community (AEC), the English learners are in high demand in the teaching and learning quality and efficiency. They should be able to cater to the practical needs of learners to make them competent enough to interact with one another and also to retrieve information worldwide. Hence, challenges for English teachers in Vietnam are diverse, which requires them to shape up accordingly to meet the existing demands. One of the most important methods which help teachers to come over that situation is the innovation in their teaching. In recent years, innovation in English teaching has become a major 'growth area' and English teaching innovation management literature has also developed⁹. There are many studies and contributions on innovation in language teaching such as Kennedy and Kennedy¹⁰, Fullan Michael¹¹, Andy Hargreaves¹², Murray¹³, Alderson¹⁴, and Wedell¹⁵.

⁴ Department of Education & Training, *Professional learning in effective schools - the seven principles of highly effective professional learning*, Melbourne: Leadership and Teacher Development Branch, 2005.

⁵ Pandey, Meenu, et al., "Modern approach of english language teaching and learning," *An international disciplinary journal* 2, (2016):1-8.

⁶ Department of Education & Training, *Professional learning in effective schools - the seven principles of highly effective professional learning*, Melbourne: Leadership and Teacher Development Branch, 2005.

⁷ Markley, Tim, *Defining the effective teacher: Current arguments in education*. 2004 Retrieved from <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.549.7407&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

⁸ Ghaith, Ghazi and Kassim, Ali Shaaban, "The prospects and problems of the new Lebanese English language curriculum." In *The new curricula in Lebanon: Evaluative review* edited by F. Ayoub, (351-364). Beirut: Lebanese Association for Educational Studies, 1999.

⁹ Alan, Waters, "Managing innovation in English language education," *Lang.Teach.* 42, (2009): 421-458.

¹⁰ Kennedy, Judith and Kennedy, Chris, "Levels, linkages, and networks in cross-cultural innovation", *System* 26, (1998):465-469.

¹¹ Fullan, Michael, *The new meaning of educational change* (5th edition). Abingdon: Routledge Publisher, 2016.

¹² Andy, Hargreaves, *Teaching in the knowledge society: education in the age of insecurity*, (New York: Teacher College Press, 2003).

¹³ Murray, Denise, *Planning change, changing plans: Innovations in second language teaching*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008).

¹⁴ Alderson, Charles. *The politics of language education: Individuals and institutions*. (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2009).

¹⁵ Wedell, Martin. *Planning for educational change: Putting people and their contexts first*. (London, England: Continuum, 2009).

Therefore, the study aims to explore perceptions and practice in innovation of English teachers who are teaching English in universities in Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam). The findings are as foundations formulating recommendations and helping to enhance teachers' innovative skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concepts and Definitions on Innovation

The word "innovation" is defined as 'introducing something new' and the Latin stem 'innovare' refers to altering or renewing, and is derived from 'novus', meaning 'new'¹⁶. Nicholls¹⁷ defines innovation as "an object or practice perceived as new by an individual or individuals, which seeks to introduce improvements in relation to the desired goals, and that is planned and deliberate". This definition still remains its validity today. Innovation is defined as "the adoption of an idea or behavior new to the adopting organization"¹⁸, or as "the implementation of new and improved knowledge, ideas, methods, processes, tools, equipment and machinery, which leads to new and better products, services, and processes"¹⁹.

Based on Markee²⁰, the nature of any given innovation is best defined in terms of qualitative change, a term which covers all three levels of innovative behavior (materials, approaches, and values). Camison-Zornoza et al.²¹ claim that what all definitions of innovation share in common is the usefulness of the new idea.

With Bradley et al.²², "research and innovation play a pivotal role in Australia's international competitiveness and ongoing prosperity. Universities contribute through their research and innovation efforts to the nation's economic growth and productivity". Also, as studied by Darasawang and Hayo²³, an innovation is "an improvement, a change; something new; something that did not exist before; something that is new in a specific context; all of the above combined; any of the above, but only when successfully implemented." From above mentioned concepts, innovation is something that is new, positively different, or better than what was there before.

In educational contexts, innovation is as a "qualitative change in pedagogical materials, methods, and that are perceived as new by individuals who comprise a formal (language) education system"²⁴. As per Fullan's observation²⁵, innovation in educational environment is full with unknowns. For last decades, many studies of innovation and educational change in language

¹⁶ Little, William, et al. *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

¹⁷ Nicholls, Audley, *Managing Educational Innovations (Education Books)*, Unwin Hyman Publisher, 1983.

¹⁸ Damanpour, Fariborz. "Organizational complexity and innovation: developing and testing multiple contingency models." *Management Science* 42, no. 5 (1996): 693-716.

¹⁹ Williams, Alan, *Creativity, invention and innovation*: (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1999).

²⁰ Markee, Numa, "The diffusion of innovation in language teaching". In *Innovation in English language teaching*, edited by Hall, D., & Hewings, (108-117), (London: Routledge Publisher, 2001).

²¹ Camison-Zornoza, et al., "A meta-analysis of innovation and organizational size," *Organization Studies*, 25 (2004): 331-361.

²² Bradley, Denise, et al., *Review of Australian higher education: final report*, (Canberra: Australian Capital Territory, 2008).

²³ Pornapit, Darasawang and Hayo, Reinders, *Innovation in language learning and teaching: the case of Thailand new language learning and teaching environments*. Springer, 2016.

²⁴ Markee, Numa, "The diffusion of innovation in language teaching," *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 13, (1992): 229-243.

²⁵ Fullan, Michael, *The new meaning of educational change* (5th edition). (Abingdon: Routledge Publisher, 2016).

teaching have been conducted by Kennedy & Kennedy²⁶, Markee²⁷, David Carless²⁸, Hall and Hewings²⁹, and the innovation is defined in extremely various ways throughout the mainstream educational literature on educational innovation and differently depending on the context as well³⁰.

The purpose of educational innovation is generally to improve classroom practice which enhances student achievement, and it involves changes at three levels: changes in teaching materials, syllabi or curricula; changes in teacher's behavior, such as techniques, approaches or activities; and changes in beliefs and principles which underlie new materials and approaches³¹. The terms 'innovation' and 'change' can be used as equivalents, both referring, somewhat indeterminately, to ideas such as 'difference' or 'novelty'³², besides, most definitions seem to contain at least one of four keys term to characterize innovation of change, development, novelty, or improvement in which the central concept of the term innovation is the idea of change and the second is "development". In English language education and teaching contexts, "development" is often defined in term of (1) curriculum development, focusing on students; (2) professional development, focusing on teachers³³ or (3) program development relating to administration³⁴. According to viewpoints of Rogers and Richards, innovation is primarily curriculum development and curriculum development is certainly an outward manifestation of innovation.

In addition, also in an education context, Duncan³⁵ illustrates the distinctions between invention and innovation as "Educational innovation should not be confused with just generating more great ideas or unique inventions. Instead we need new solutions that improve outcomes – and that can, and will, be used to serve hundreds of thousands of teachers and millions of students". This concept is also agreed by Davenport³⁶. From the viewpoint of Duncan, innovation requires going further than a single invention and inventions are conceptualized as a first step towards an innovation. Under the point of view of Davenport³⁷, innovation is as an organizational phenomenon, where to be innovative refers to putting in place practices that are substantively different from, or have more desired outcomes than what has gone before.

For language teaching discipline, an improvement in a program is a knowledgeable change which is a hidden philosophy of language teaching/learning. The philosophy is brought by direct

²⁶ Kennedy, Judith and Kennedy, Chris, "Levels, linkages, and networks in cross-cultural innovation", *System* 26, (1998):465-469.

²⁷ Markee, Numa. *Managing curricular innovation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

²⁸ David Carless, "A case study of curriculum innovation in Hong Kong," *System* 26, (1998): 353–368.

²⁹ Hall, David and Hewings, Ann, *Innovation in English language teaching: A Reader*, Routledge Publisher, 2001.

³⁰ Hayes, David, *Innovations in the continuing professional development of English language teachers*. (London: British Council, 2014)

³¹ Rea-Dickins, Pauline & Germaine, Kevin P, *The price of everything and value of nothing: Trends in language programme evaluation*. Routledge: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1998; Rea-Dickins, Pauline. & Germaine, Kevin P, *Managing evaluation and innovation in language teaching: Building bridges*, Harlow: Longman, 1998.

³² De Lano, L., et al. "The meaning of innovation for ESL teachers", *System* 22, No. 4 (1994): 487-496.

³³ Nunan, David, *Language teaching methodology*, Prentice Hall Publisher, 1991.

³⁴ Brown, James Dean, *The elements of language curriculum: A systematic approach to program development*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle. 1995.

³⁵ Duncan, Arne, "From Compliance to Innovation," 2009. Retrieved from <https://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/compliance-innovation>

³⁶ Davenport, Thomas, *Process innovation: reengineering work through information technology*, (Boston: Harvard Business School Press. 1993)

³⁷ Davenport, Thomas, *Process innovation: reengineering work through information technology...*

experience, research findings, leading to modification of teaching practices so that the instruction can assist language learning³⁸. This definition performs the key role of teachers in the process of innovation where they have many choices on teaching materials, technologies and methods because many of them will be regularly replaced time by time. In English language education and teaching, adoption of innovation may be different from innovation in education in general because teachers can implement an innovation in their existing contexts if they have an opportunity to be aware of their attitudes, clarify them, and refine them.

Nature and Characteristics of Innovation

Markee³⁹ identifies the four-stage process of innovation adoption (1) gaining innovation knowledge, (2) becoming persuaded of its value, (3) making preliminary decisions, and (4) confirming or rejecting their previous decisions and provides distinction between primary innovations (changes to teaching materials or pedagogy) and secondary innovations (organizational changes which provide enabling support for the primary innovation). Later, also in the study of Markee⁴⁰, the nature of any given innovation is best defined in terms of qualitative change covering all three levels of the innovative behavior of materials, approaches, and values. Moreover, to be successful with innovation, all these three levels of innovative behavior should be changed at the same time.

In addition, Fullan Michael⁴¹ and others indicate innovating as comprising three broad phases (1) initiation (deciding to go ahead with an innovation), (2) implementation (attempting to put the innovation into practice), and (3) institutionalization (seeking to achieve sustainability). However, Edge and Mann⁴² reveal that a new idea is in itself not an innovation as innovation demands concentration on the process; it requires much attention paid to how we teach or train as to which topics get covered along the way, or the tools are employed.

Many papers in innovation in language education are on top-down programmatic or curricular developments⁴³ and methods of teachers being engaged with the process of innovation⁴⁴. As Stoller⁴⁵ notes, ‘Top-down innovations are rarely successful without teacher enthusiasm and endorsement. Similarly, bottom-up innovations rarely sustain themselves without the support of the administration.’ While White⁴⁶ responses “even bottom-up grassroots innovation will require forms of support which can only be provided by superordinate top-down parts of the system.”

³⁸ De Lano, L., et al. “The meaning of innovation for ESL teachers”, *System* 22, No. 4 (1994): 487-496.

³⁹ Markee, Numa. *Managing curricular innovation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁴⁰ Markee, Numa. “The diffusion of Innovation in Language Teaching”, in *Innovation in English Language Teaching: A Reader*, edited by Hall R.D. and Hewings, A. (118-126), New York, USA: Routledge, 2001.

⁴¹ Fullan, Michael, *The new meaning of educational change* (5th edition). Abingdon: Routledge Publisher, 2016.

⁴² Edge, Julian and Mann, Steve, *Innovations in pre-service education and training for English language teachers*, (London: British Council, 2013).

⁴³ Markee, Numa, “The diffusion of innovation in language teaching,” *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 13, (1992): 229–243.

⁴⁴ Stoller, Fredricka, “Innovation as hallmark of effective leadership,” in *English leadership language education: Theoretical foundations and practical skills for changing time* edited by M. A. Christison & D. Murray, 73-84, New York: Routledge Publisher, 2009; White, Ronald, “Managing innovation,” *ELT journal* 41, (1987): 211-218.

⁴⁵ Stoller, Fredricka, “Innovation as hallmark of effective leadership,” in *English leadership language education: Theoretical foundations and practical skills for changing time* edited by M. A. Christison & D. Murray, 73-84, New York: Routledge Publisher, 2009).

⁴⁶ White, Ronald, *the ELT curriculum: Design, innovation and management*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

There are many factors which affect successful adoption, such as teachers' attitudes, the clarity of the proposed innovation, teacher training, communication and support during implementation and the compatibility of the innovation to the classroom and the wider educational context⁴⁷. In the book of Darasawang and Hayo⁴⁸ titled "Innovation in language learning and teaching: the case of Thailand new language learning and teaching environments", the most important factor in the success of an innovation originating with an external agent is the strong leadership of internal stakeholders (such as teachers, principals influenced by the ethos of the context they belong to). This leads to conflict with their existing beliefs and causes the innovation failure by the incompatibility. The idea is agreed by Rogers⁴⁹ as his statement on compatibility of the innovation as not only the attributes of a successful innovation but also the factor affecting the rate of adoption. Feasibility and practicality of the innovation for teachers in terms of demands on time, resources, and organizational limitation play important roles. In addition, systematic, ongoing and long-term teacher training that aims to change teacher attitudes and making them change agents is essential to help make the adoption of an innovation successful⁵⁰. Furthermore, Darasawang and Hayo⁵¹ point out other factors that contribute to the success of innovation are good communication, feedback during the implementation of the innovation and support from the institution.

Importance and Reason of Innovation in English Teaching

In research by David Carless⁵², the main objectives for change are indicative of the centrality and ubiquity of innovations, and stakeholders expect education to be more effective for students⁵³. Schools gain benefits in keeping up-to-date with the latest developments or research findings, and can also be a force to encourage educational equity and fairer opportunities for diverse sections of society as pointed out by David Carless⁵⁴. Additionally, the economic competitiveness development can achieve through educational changes. According to Nor Aziah Alias and Ahmad Marzuki Zainuddin⁵⁵, the benefits are time saving, organization of lectures, materials, provision of good and effective ways to evaluate students, enhancement of interaction between lectures and students, provision of extra resources for lectures.

⁴⁷ Rea-Dickins, Pauline & Germaine, Kevin P, *The price of everything and value of nothing: Trends in language programme evaluation*. Routledge: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1998; Rea-Dickins, Pauline. & Germaine, Kevin P, *Managing evaluation and innovation in language teaching: Building bridges*, Harlow: Longman, 1998.

⁴⁸ Pornapit, Darasawang and Hayo, Reinders, *Innovation in language learning and teaching: the case of Thailand new language learning and teaching environments*. Springer, 2016.

⁴⁹ Rogers, Everett, *The diffusion of innovations (5th ed.)*. (New York, NY: Free Press, 2003)

⁵⁰ Rea-Dickins, Pauline & Germaine, Kevin P, *The price of everything and value of nothing: Trends in language programme evaluation*. Routledge: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1998; Rea-Dickins, Pauline. & Germaine, Kevin P, *Managing evaluation and innovation in language teaching: Building bridges*, (Harlow: Longman, 1998).

⁵¹ Pornapit, Darasawang and Hayo, Reinders, *Innovation in language learning and teaching: the case of Thailand new language learning and teaching environments*. Springer, 2016.

⁵² David Carless, *Innovation in language teaching and learning*, (Blackwell Publishing Limited, 2013).

⁵³ http://web.edu.hku.hk/f/acadstaff/412/2013_Innovation-in-language-teaching-and-learning.pdf

⁵⁴ David Carless, *Innovation in language teaching and learning*, (Blackwell Publishing Limited, 2013).

⁵⁵ Nor Aziah, Alias & Ahmad, Marzuki Zainuddin, "Innovation for better teaching and learning: adopting the learning management system," *Malaysian Online Journal of Instructional Technology* 2, No.2 (2005): 27-40.

As for Solanki and Phil⁵⁶, because the number of English learners is increasing, different teaching methods must be implemented and changed to test the effectiveness of the teaching process. Carnoy⁵⁷ emphasized that advancements in information and communication technologies (ICT) and portable information has made English “the language of globalization, internet, trade and science”. Pursuant to John Mitchell⁵⁸, innovation in teaching is a response to multiple change drivers because of the growing economic and commercial value of knowledge and skills; complexity/uncertainty increase, change of structures of work, change of structures of industry and employment, the dynamic knowledge imperative, the aggressive spread of the value proposition, public policy, shrinking of time horizons, and change of from mass production to market segmentation.

In light of English language teaching, with the rapid development of science and technology, the emerging and developing of multimedia technology and its application to teaching, featuring audio, visual, animation effects comes into full play in English class teaching and sets a favorable platform for reform and exploration on English teaching model in the new era. The new era assigns new challenges and duties on the modern teacher. The tradition of English teaching has been drastically changed with the remarkable entry of technology. As shown in the study of Graddol⁵⁹, technology is one of the most significant drivers of both social and linguistic change. The teaching principle should be to appreciate new technologies in the areas and functions where they provide something decisively useful, and never let machines take over the role of the teacher or limit functions where more traditional ways are superior. There are various reasons why all language learners and teachers must know how to make use of the new technology. Here we also need to emphasize that the new technologies develop and disseminate so quickly that we cannot avoid their attraction and influence in any form. Therefore, with OECD’s research in 2012⁶⁰, innovation in developing countries poses very different challenges, in terms of understanding the process and of building systems.

In term of curriculum innovation, some skills are required as the use of computers, software or utilization of knowledge in a specialist field⁶¹, and change agents in both of negative and positive sides of effects⁶². In addition, a balance should be done between “thing technologies” and “people

⁵⁶ Solanki, Shyamlee D. and Phil, M., “Use of Technology in English language teaching and learning”: An Analysis (2012): 150-155 retrieved from <http://www.ipedr.com/vol33/030-ICLMC2012-L10042.pdf>

⁵⁷ Carnoy, Martin, *Globalization and educational reform: what planners need to know*, (Paris: UNESCO/IIEP. Rhoads, 1999).

⁵⁸ John Mitchell, et al., “The nature of innovation in VET professional practice” in *Proceedings of AVETRA Conference, Sydney*, 10 April 2003. Retrieved from <http://www.jma.com.au/upload/pages/professional-practice/avetra-paper-on-innovation-8-april-2003.pdf?1377489802>

⁵⁹ Graddol, David, *The Future of English? - A guide to forecasting the popularity of the English language in the 21st century*, The British Council, 1997. Retrieved from <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/learning-elt-future.pdf>

⁶⁰ <http://www.oecd.org/innovation/inno/50586251.pdf>

⁶¹ Tatnall, Arthur and Davey Bill, “Improving the chances to get your IT curriculum innovation successfully adopted by the application of ecological approach to innovation,” *Informing science* 7, (2004): 87-103

⁶² Markee, Numa. “The diffusion of Innovation in Language Teaching”, in *Innovation in English Language Teaching: A Reader*, edited by Hall R.D. and Hewings, A. (118-126), (New York, USA: Routledge, 2001)

technologies”, that means the people' knowledge on how to face with new, untested teaching practices⁶³.

METHODOLOGY

The study employs two sources of secondary and primary data. The secondary data is gained with the systematic and content analyses through published papers from different sources as Google scholar, Books, Sciencedirect.com to create the theoretical foundations of the study. Later, from this foundation, the primary data is generated through online questionnaire/surveys, semi-structured talks and interviews with English language teachers and administrators.

- Online questionnaire containing 8 questions with 68 English language teachers who are employing in universities. All of them are the graduates from the four-year university program majored in English language, and they gain at least 3 year teaching experience. 20 of them are teaching English as a major, and others are lecturing for the non-major English programs. The questions focus on their innovation perceptions, reality and barriers via teaching methods and their own researches in their professions, etc.

- After getting feedback/ response of the questionnaires, semi-structured and direct interviews via mobile apps as Skype, Viber, and phone talks are carried out with 16 English teachers to gain their deeper information shares on innovation and proposals on their real world.

- Phone interviews with 4 heads (administrators) who are teaching or are discipline heads / administrators (including 2 from the university, 2 from language centres) to gain deeper innovation standpoints of their subordinates' teaching and evaluation. For the interviews, all are done in Vietnamese, later they recorded, noted and transcribed.

FINDINGS, DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings from the teachers

With the understanding of most of English teachers, nearly 100% of them think they have notions on what the “so-called” innovation is. With them, innovation is something relating to NEW. In addition, they have also accepted the meaning of the word “innovation” as change, development, novelty and improvement. Next, they add more ideas as “enhancement” into the meaning of innovation. Later, enhancement is under this case considered as “simply adding a feature and making something stand out, and improvement is to alter for something better.”

In term of the innovation benefits, 70.6% of the teachers, they agree that innovation will benefit their professions, in contrast, 25% of them express the neutral viewpoints and 5.9% have the opposite opinion with the majority. They state that innovative issues would lead to the negative outcomes. As for them, sometimes, if the current teaching situation is in the good mood, the innovation should not be conducted.

With the question on the change of teaching methods and its application to classrooms, the result seems not to have differences between 2 groups of teachers. 91% of them does not feel the teaching methods should be changed during the semester or for the academic year because they think they are qualified and well-equipped and the change of methods might make student negative

⁶³ Chin, Robert and Benne, Kenneth D., “General strategies for effecting change in human systems”, in *The planning of change* edited by W. G. Bennis, K. D. Benne, & R. Chin, (4th Edition, pp. 22-43), (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976).

in classrooms. They confirm their applied methods and prepared lesson plans are well at the beginning of the semester or the whole year.

Regarding to the use of technology platforms, they state that those uses are upon to the modules or subjects if those are in need to use. According the teachers who are teaching English majored students, 91.2% of them are using PowerPoint, media tool internet references to make the lectures more interesting and impressive. About 41% of them are really active and dynamic in lesson plan and lecture. They download video clips/ notes, lectures as illustrations to teach their students. As for the teachers in non-majored discipline, the lecturing and grammar translation method are often used at 91.2% rate. This is because of the students who normally do not paid much attention to the English subject or its importance. One significant point is that 79.4% of the teachers say they do not have a research paper or publications in their profession term. The majority of English teachers have to teach at least 20 - 30 hours per week, plus all other administrative tasks and extra evening classes. That is why 90% of the both groups showed that they have no time to think up with innovative ideas in teaching. They are not paying attention to the change of education/ training programs because it is not in their control, and because there have many complicated procedures for the changes to be approved. Moreover, it also depends on the teachers' self-motivation for higher education to have a bigger viewpoint about education in general and teaching career in specific.

Findings from the Administrators

The results are not much different with the findings and expressed views of the teachers. As for them, 83.8% of administrators agree with the barriers of teachers in innovation issue as heavy pressure of teaching, low quality of students, insufficient funds, lack of administrative supports and infrastructure, low performance of teachers and personal unpreparedness.

As known, one of the innovation forms is the research and at present, by many pressures from stakeholders, the teachers are required to do academic research but 91.2% of teachers choose teaching instead of doing a research. 79.4% of administrators also clarify and confirm that for a long time, the university policies are not really motivating and promoting teachers to perform innovation. The university does not require the teacher to study or do any academic research or publish their papers. The teachers are mostly required to focus on their teachings. Besides, 79.4% of the English teachers graduate from the Master degrees by coursework program and they are not familiar with doing a research or publishing an article. In light of conditions for innovation, due to the lack of funds, they cannot (1) buy English books, magazines or other material sources for references (2) send the teachers to teacher training or development programs, (3) improve their teachers living standards and working conditions and (4) spend much money for rewarding innovations as well. As a result, there are the out-of-date teaching facilities or short of proper sufficient professional training. Most teachers must stick to the old teaching mode and methods and have no motivation to innovate in their teaching.

As for the teacher who are teaching and lecturing in the English majored program, they are more dynamic by changing the teaching methods, information technology use and 25% of them have publications or do academic researches. In contrast, it seems that 70.6% of teachers who are in the non-major program do not pay their concerns to the "so-called" research or study. In term of self-development of teachers, upon to the administrators, 91.2% of teachers express they will not continue to follow the Ph.D. program because it is not necessary due to many reasons.

Recommendations to Enhance the Innovation in English Teachers

As stated, innovation in teaching, especially English language teaching, involves more than one aspect like teaching mode and method, teaching facilities development and utilization, management. To enhance the innovative activities in English language teacher, some issues are recommended as follows:

- Innovation is important and brings benefits to all stakeholders in the education system; however, how to manage and how to motivate the teachers are more important because that will definitely affect the innovation effects in other aspects. The first thing concerned is innovation in leadership. University or faculty heads must meet with particular leadership styles that encourage innovation by employing participatory approaches. Simply put, innovation means letting go of the old and exploring the new, which requires a set of activities that are not commonly employed. University should establish a set of regulations or policies for teachers to follow and practice. Moreover, the leaders must break up the already-established management formula and set up a new one. Open discussion forums should be built up to discover and understand the teachers' ideas and opinions. Hence, a collaborative and shared decision-making environment needs building and individual's feelings of self-worth and satisfaction needs promoting; accordingly, innovation will be increased. Additionally, the university assesses the teachers' innovation through an overall performance appraisal system and any kind of innovation with active goal should be encouraged regardless of its possible failure. Only by this way, teachers innovate and put their innovative thinking into practice. To deliver or create enthusiasm, inspiration and experience, some experts or experienced teachers are also invited to lecture on certain special topics. As for model teaching, programs may be performed in real classrooms. In observing model teaching, both of trainers and trainees work together and share their personal insights of classroom happenings, as a consequence, many benefits are from it to improve their own teaching. Innovative training program can help to produce innovative teachers who will produce innovative teaching and students.

- As a teacher, innovation is not just the responsibility but the contribution to the development of innovation by finding new, different or better ways of working. Strong innovation skill is not only the critical issue but also the requirement in the 21st century economy⁶⁴. Furthermore, innovative thinking skills are not necessarily innate; they can be learnt and developed from how to think creatively, find new ideas, change the way you perceive the world, and to work with others in innovative processes⁶⁵. In short, innovation requires the willingness to fail, a focus on fuzzy outcomes rather than standardized measures, and the bravery to resist the system's emphasis on strict accountability. There are a variety of ways to bolster the creative side such as establishing rituals, changing the mind-set, opening up to new ways of thinking, seeking support from others, networking with likeminded people.

CONCLUSIONS

Innovation and creativity are the essence of teaching and learning. Creativity and innovation bring interest and motivation to learners of English as well as teachers of English. In Vietnam case, the innovation plays critical role to bring benefits to the education system, the university, and the teachers. Therefore, this paper is to explore perceptions, practice in innovation

⁶⁴ <http://www.innovationmanagement.se/2012/01/30/how-to-build-your-innovation-skills/>

⁶⁵ <https://www.universalclass.com/articles/business/developing-innovative-thinking-skills.htm>

of English in universities in Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam). The findings are as foundations formulating recommendations and helping enhance teachers' innovative skills. This study scopes get limited because the survey is carried out in some universities in Ho Chi Minh City and the sample collection in the convenience method in which is not representing for the whole discipline. Then the further researches need stuying in the future.

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