A NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF ENGLISH TEACHER EDUCATION INTERNATIONALIZATION IN VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

English teacher education is a key contributor to the development of English language teaching and learning in Vietnam. As shown from previous studies, the quality of English teacher education internationalization is not at a satisfactory level. The paper presents part of the findings of a study using a needs assessment on the English Teacher Education Program (ETEP) in a Public University (a pseudonym is used throughout). The needs assessment was conducted to provide the ETEP's designers with students' overall satisfaction with the program and the extent to which the ETEP meets its students' specific needs. The research adopted the methodology of needs assessment proposed by Watkins et al. (2012). The research applied a quantitative approach with a dual-response questionnaire employed as the instrument. Findings reveal that generally, the ETEP satisfies students' needs at the medium level though some aspects of the ETEP such as soft skill development and the process of learning how to teach need improving. It is recommended that the link between practice and theory should be strengthened for a higher quality ETEP through technology integration, teaching practicum improvement, and soft skill integration.

Keywords: Evaluation, program evaluation, needs assessment, teacher education, program objective

Introduction

The English language is one of the most popular foreign languages being in Vietnam (H. T. M. Nguyen, 2017). Recognizing the importance of foreign languages in general and English in particular, the Vietnamese government has launched many policies to enhance the learning and teaching of foreign languages. The National Foreign Language 2020 Project (NFL 2020 Project) currently being implemented is the most important one for the improvement of the foreign language capacity of the Vietnamese people (Le, 2015; NFL 2020 Project, 2016; Vo, 2017).

As well as this, an English Teacher Competency Framework (ETCF) was implemented in 2013. The ETCF is used as a guide to design teacher training internationalization and to assess the development of competencies for teachers of English in Vietnam (NFL 2020 Project, 2013). The framework also serves as a reference for designing English language proficiency tests in Vietnam.

English teacher education globally has been facing such issues as a lack of practice in the program, and the inappropriate process of learning to develop soft skills. In Taiwan, Luo (2003) found that there was a distance between theory and practice in EFL teacher education internationalization. The issue was also observed in the Philippines where there was a gap between theory and practice (Sunga, 2004). In Vietnam, H. T. M. Nguyen (2017) discovered that English teacher education did not provide a good connection between theory and practice when teaching practicum was not very effective. The process of learning how to teach is ineffective due to some weaknesses in the implementation of the teaching practicum (Vo et al., 2018). Furthermore, due to the lack of time for practice, not enough attention is paid to soft skill development in English teacher education (H.T.M. Nguyen, 2017).

In a lot of research, there is an urge to retrain teachers of English whose knowledge and skills are found to be unsuitable for modern English teaching and learning (NFL 2020 Project, 2008; Nguyen & Hudson, 2012; H. T. M. Nguyen, 2017). Besides in-service teacher training, there is a need to improve English teacher education internationalization. It is expected that the quality of teachers of English provided by the English teacher education internationalization in Vietnam in general and by the ETEP in Public University, in particular, should be improved to meet the new standards of an English teacher in modern classrooms.

The ETEP, which educates teachers of English for secondary and high schools, is a typical English teacher education program in Vietnam. All English teacher education internationalization are developed from the framework supported by the Ministry of Education and Training (H.T.M. Nguyen, 2017). The implementation of these internationalization is,

therefore, somewhat similar. Currently, the ETCF is used as a new guideline for English teacher education internationalization to redesign themselves so that they can educate teachers of English who meet the new standards of English teaching (NFL 2020 Project, 2008). Yet, what to change and how to change need to be carefully considered.

In evaluation research, the evaluation is conducted when there is a need to have an assessment of a program for program improvement or decision making (Glass & Worthen, 1972a, 1972b). To find what and how to change within English teacher education internationalization, the research employing a needs assessment was conducted on the ETEP, a typical English teacher education program in Vietnam. The needs assessment on the ETEP was conducted to identify the extent to which the ETEP meets its students' needs. The most significant contribution of the research to the ETEP in particular and English teacher education in Vietnam is an understanding of students' actual needs and students' overall satisfaction. Based on such information, implications for improving ETEP and other similar English teacher education internationalization are suggested.

Literature Review

Recognizing the needs or making needs assessments is necessary to make decisions in education. Therefore, conducting needs assessments is essential in education, especially when changes should be made to educational internationalization for improvements or curriculum development (Peng, 1983).

Previous Studies

It has been revealed from numerous studies that the proportion of in-service teachers of English from primary schools to high schools in Vietnam who meet the language proficiency requirements is quite low even though there have been improvements in the number (Nguyen & Mai, 2015; NFL 2020 project, 2016). The language proficiency requirement for primary and secondary school teachers of English is level 4 in the Vietnamese Six Level Framework of Language Proficiency (VSTEP) or B2 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR). High school teachers of English are required to meet level 5 or C1 in CEFR. The VSTEP follows a six-level proficiency band (level 1 to level 6), which matches the equivalence to the six-level bands of the CEFR (A1 to C2).

Table 1: Percentage of Teachers Who Met Language Proficiency Requirements

Teachers' levels	2011-2012	2014-2015
Primary school teachers	17%	55%
Lower secondary school teachers	13%	56%
Senior secondary school teachers	8%	48%

(Le et al., 2017)

As shown in Table 1, the percentage of school teachers of English who met the language proficiency requirements is quite low even though there has been an increase in the percentage. Specifically, a mere 17% of primary teachers of English, 13% of lower secondary teachers of English, and only 8% of senior secondary teachers of English satisfied the language proficiency requirement in the period from 2011 to 2012. The rates rose to 55% of primary teachers of English, 56% of lower secondary teachers of English, and 48% of senior secondary teachers of English who met the English proficiency requirements between 2014 and 2015. The reasons for this low quality are numerous. According to H. T.M. Nguyen (2017), outdated pre-service English teacher education internationalization is one of these reasons. Such a fact raises the issue of making changes to the pre-service English teacher education internationalization. Yet, how to change and what to change are difficult issues.

Besides in-service teacher training, pre-service English teacher education in Vietnam has also received a lot of attention from researchers. One of the major findings regarding English teacher education internationalization in Vietnam is the ineffectiveness of teaching practicum, particularly in the way it has been conducted (H. T. M. Nguyen, 2017). It was supposed that during the teaching practicum, students learned how to teach from school teachers by observing their lessons, getting feedback, and working with them. Yet, the reality was quite different. Pre-service teachers of English had been observed to merely show alignment with school teachers by imitating their way of teaching, rather than applying what they had learned from methodological courses at universities (Le, 2013). It would have been fine if school teachers had adopted modern teaching methods in their lessons. However, in Vietnam, traditional teaching methods such as the grammar-translation approach are still used by school teachers (H. T. M. Nguyen, 2017). A similar picture is also seen in many other countries in the world. English teacher education in China is also found to have unsatisfactory quality due to a lack of practice (Hu, 2005). There is a need to reform the pre-service teachers' teaching practicum there due to the poor implementation of teaching practicum (Campbell & Hu, 2010; Yan & He, 2010). In Singapore, it has been found that mentoring for EFL pre-service teachers is not effective, and Malaysia also faces a similar problem for student teachers' internships (H.T.M. Nguyen, 2017, Vo et al, 2018). One suggested measure to overcome this shortcoming is the adoption of a more responsive mentoring process by the mentor teachers and/or peers. (Nguyen & Hudson, 2012; Nguyen & Baldauf, R., 2010; H. T. M. Nguyen, 2017).

Another key finding concerns the schism between theory and practice in pre-service English teacher education (H. T. M. Nguyen, 2017), particularly the lack of focus on soft skills development (Pachauri & Yadav, 2014). Yet, soft skills such as communication, leadership, and cooperation are the prerequisites of 21st-century teachers. Thus far, there has only been a lukewarm response to the issue. It appears that further investigation needs to be carried out for more improvement in English teacher education and training (Le, 2001, 2013).

The low quality of in-service English teacher training and pre-service English teacher education internationalization in Vietnam stimulates the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) and researchers alike to conduct more studies on English teacher education to upgrade the teaching and learning of English. It is hoped that further in-depth studies will be able to bridge the gap in research and also throw more light on program designers and curriculum developers to help them improve the ETEP.

English Teacher Education in The Public University

In Vietnam, the Public University is one of the major institutions charged with foreign language teacher education, and it is considered to be the largest university of foreign languages in the center of Vietnam. The ETEP is one of the language teacher education internationalization of the Language Teacher Education department, one of the eight departments in the Public University. The ETEP aims at educating teachers of English for secondary and high schools. There are 16 lecturers in the English Teacher Education division, with a total number of students of the ETEP standing at 271 at the time of this study. The ETEP has a long history, and it has been one of the main internationalization of the Public University since its establishment in 1985. The program has been continuously revised at the university level to keep it up-to-date and relevant. The document version of the ETEP used in this needs assessment is the 2015 version.

Method

General Background of the research

Pre-service English teacher education internationalization, which educates teachers of English for secondary and high schools, consists of two components: a professional component and a general component. The two components are worth in total approximately 150 credits. Both the general component and the professional component are developed based on the framework supported by the Ministry of Education and Training. The framework provides details on the kinds of subjects to be studied and suggests the number of credits for each subject. Yet, the university has flexibility in choosing subjects and allocating the number of credits to specific subjects when it designs its program and curriculum.

The professional component includes English proficiency development and pedagogical skill and development, among which teaching practicum is a key part for developing the ability of how to teach (Vo, 2018). Often, students have a three-week field trip in their third year to familiarize themselves with the school environment and pupils, and in their fourth year a five-week teaching practicum to learn and practice teaching. Yet, in the ETEP, students have only one chance for the teaching practicum in the final year.

Participants

The total number of ETEP students enrolled in the program was 271 at the time of this study. These students are being educated to be teachers of English at secondary and high schools. However, the first-year students were not considered in this study as they had just enrolled in the ETEP. There were a total of 57 students who enrolled in Year 1. Invitations to take part in the questionnaire were, thus, sent out through email and Facebook to the rest of the students (214). They were asked to answer the questionnaire by selecting the importance level and their satisfaction level for each item on the questionnaire. A total of 200 students responded positively and in time to the questionnaire. However, 13 respondents were removed from the list of respondents as they did not complete the questionnaire fully. The demography features of the participants are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic Features of Sample Population

Total of valid responses: 187		Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	9	4.8%
	Female	178	95.2%
Current class level	2nd year	51	27.3%
	3rd year	75	40.1%
	4th year	61	32.6%
Age	19	40	21.4%
	20	78	41.7%
	21	58	31%
	22	10	5.3%
	25	1	0.5%

Research design and procedure

This research uses a needs assessment for the research design and procedure. The term "needs" in the needs assessment refers to the measurable gap or discrepancy between the current outcomes and desired outcomes, or between "what is" and "what should be" (Messner, 2009; Watkins et al., 2012). With such a meaning of 'needs", needs assessment is defined as a process that is designed to determine a desired or required situation in the area assessed the present or real situation, and a priority ranking of the kinds and degree of discrepancies (Peng, 1983). According to Kaufman (1985, cited in Stewart & Cuffman, 1996), "needs assessments to involve identifying and justifying gaps in results, and placing gaps in prioritized order for attention" (p.2). Kaufman (1994) considers needs assessment as the process of identifying and prioritizing performance needs.

Needs assessment consists of three phases: pre-assessment, assessment, post-assessment (Altschuld, 2010). During the first phase, the overall scope and plan for the assessment are determined. The first phase focuses on existing information rather than on collecting new data.

The second phase aims at implementing the assessment to generate information. Phase 3 involves sharing and using the information to guide decisions.

Besides Altschuld's (2010) three-phase framework, Watkins et al. (2012) propose a somewhat similar three-step procedure to conduct a needs assessment. These three steps are identifying, analyzing, and deciding. As suggested by the name, the first step is to identify needs gaps between desired and current results. The analyzing step is the analysis process that links "needs with the information required to make decisions about what action should be taken" (Watkins et al., 2012, p.48). The final step is to make decisions based on the analysis.

In this study, based on the principles of the two frameworks above, the conceptual framework for the research was constructed in three phases: identifying, analyzing, and making decisions. In this framework, the three phases of needs assessment discussed in the literature review are adopted as the heuristics for the research procedures. It began with a document review to identify the main objectives of the program, followed by the design of the questionnaire for identifying the students' needs. Specifically, in this study, the dual-response survey developed from Noel-Levitz (1994, 2014) was selected for use because the survey is constructed to visualize needs and they are specially designed for program evaluation. Then, quantitative data were collected through the use of dual response questionnaires, which allows researchers to collect information regarding both current and desired performance (Watkins et al., 2012) to identify needs. This was followed by data analysis and interpretation as the second step of the needs assessment, the "analyzing step". In the second step, the performance gaps were calculated to identify the needs, and the mean was also calculated to see the general satisfaction of students. In the "deciding step", based on the findings so far, decisions on what and how to change were made about previous studies in the field.

Research instrument

The main data elicitation instrument is the questionnaire adapted from Noel-Levitz's priorities survey (1994, 2014), the four-year university-and-college version. The original survey was primarily developed by Noel-Leviz for traditional-aged students in undergraduate internationalization (Noel-Levitz, 1994, 2014). Yet, what is interesting from the survey is that it gives users the flexibility to add items or only use some parts of the survey, depending on the researchers' purposes. Therefore, many versions of the survey can be found in the literature (Zhang et al., 2011; Sinclair, 2012; Hanchell, 2014). In this study, items in part 2 of the questionnaire were developed from the objectives of the ETEP because the focus of the study is to find out the specific needs of students regarding the program's objectives.

The questionnaire has three parts. The first part is reserved for demographic features. The second part has 17 items to identify the strengths and challenges of the program, and the last part

includes questions to gain information on students' overall satisfaction. The dual response questionnaire uses a 7-point Likert scale, with responses designed to gather participants' opinions on degrees of importance and satisfaction. The items on the degree of importance have scales ranging from "not important at all (1)" to" very important (7)", while the satisfaction items have scales ranging from "not satisfied at all (1)" to "very satisfied (7)".

For the validity of the questionnaire, before the main study was carried out, a pilot study was conducted with 15% of the sample population (Baker, 1994). The pilot study yielded a reliability score (Cronbach's alpha) of .978 for the set of importance scores, and .932 for the set of satisfaction scores. For validity, the questionnaire was also sent to three experts, who are specialized in either education or TESOL, for content validation. Based on the pilot study and comments from the experts, the questionnaire was modified for better comprehensibility to better serve the purpose of the intended evaluation. The reliability value of the questionnaire in the main study was relatively high with .957 for importance scores and .927 for satisfaction scores.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using IBM SPSS version 20. Reliability, Mean, Standard Deviation, and Performance Gap (the difference between the mean for important scores and the mean for satisfaction scores) measures were coded for the data analysis (Noel-Levitz, 2015). The performance gap is calculated by means for importance scores minus means for satisfaction scores. In other words, the performance gap shows the distance between the actual outcomes and the desired outcomes. Since effect size is defined as the difference between two means divided by the pooled standard deviation (Cohen, 1988), the size of the performance gap can be determined by Table 3.

Table 3. Interpretation of Effect Size (Cohen, 1988)

Value of effect size	Effect
ES < 0.2	Nil
$0.2 \geq ES < 0.5$	Small
$0.5 \geq ES < 0.8$	Medium
$ES \geq 0.8$	Large

Results and Discussion

Students' Overall Satisfaction

Students' satisfaction with the ETEP was assessed via the first question of part 3 of the questionnaire. According to Cohen et al. (2007), with the questionnaire employing a seven-point Likert scale, the level of satisfaction score is low if the score is between 1 and 3; the level is medium with the score from 4 to 5, and the level is high with the score between 6 and 7.

Table 4. Students' Overall Satisfaction

Questions	Mean	Level of Satisfaction
1. So far, how has your college experience met your expectations?	3.9	Medium
2. Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far.	4.1	Medium
3. All in all, if you had the chance to choose a major for your university education again, would you enroll in the English Teacher Education Program?	4.7	Medium

Table 5 shows that the satisfaction level of all three questions is medium, which denotes that the overall level of satisfaction the professional component of the ETEP brings to students is at the medium level. The first question elicited a response about the extent to which the program met their expectation. Findings show that approximately 36.9% of students found their experience with their university "about what was expected", while 21.4% thought their college experience was "worse than was expected". 17.1% felt their college experience was better than they expected. 13.9% thought they had quite a bit worse experience than they expected. "Much better than I expected" and "much worse than I expected" accounted for 2.7% and 1.1 % of the responses respectively.

When asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the program, those who had no idea (neutral) occupied the highest percentage with 32.1%. Next was "somewhat satisfied" with 23.5%, and "satisfied" with 14.4%. "Somewhat dissatisfied" and "dissatisfied" had 20% and 10% responses respectively. "Very satisfied" had the lowest percentage with 0.5%. "Not satisfied at all" recorded only 1.1% as well.

Regarding the item on whether they would choose to enroll in the ETEP if they had the chance to choose the major again, the choice of "maybe yes" recorded 25.1%, followed by "probably yes" at 19.3%, and "definitely yes" at 14.4%. In contrast, the percentages of those who would not choose to enroll in the ETEP again yielded lower responses, with "maybe not" at 16.6%, "probably not" at 5.9%, and "definitely not" at 3.2%. Contrasting the degree of positive responses (from "maybe yes" to "definitely yes") with the negative responses (from "maybe not to not"), there is an obvious shift to the positive (58.8% positive against 25.7% negative, and neutral 15.5%), implying that the students felt confident in the program. In sum, the ETEP was found to have met the students' overall expectations at a medium level.

The Extent to Which the ETEP Meets Its Students' Needs

Table 5. Performance Gaps

Item number	Items	Importance mean (s.d.)	Satisfaction mean (s.d.)	Performance gap
C	**Concerns for Students (cluster)**	5.49 (1.06)	4.49 (1.01)	1.00
1	Students feel a sense of belonging to the department.	4.98 (1.55)	4.32 (1.44)	0.67
2	The program's objectives are accessible to students.	5.43 (1.38)	4.41 (1.28)	1.02
3	The program's curriculum is accessible to students.	5.49 (1.38)	4.44 (1.29)	1.05
4	The staff at this university are caring and helpful.	5.55 (1.45)	4.41 (1.50)	1.14
5	The teaching staff is knowledgeable.	6.19 (1.22)	5.09 (1.43)	1.10
6	My academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual.	5.32 (1.45)	4.25 (1.54)	1.07
	Study Requirement (cluster)	5.70 (1.18)	4.69 (1.11)	1.01
7	My academic advisor is knowledgeable about requirements in my majors.	5.67 (1.34)	4.76 (1.41)	.91
8	Graduation requirements are clear.	5.90 (1.34)	4.89 (1.51)	1.01
9	Graduation requirements are reasonable.	5.80 (1.40)	4.69 (1.49)	1.11
10	There are many options for courses in the program.	5.41 (1.45)	4.42 (1.40)	.99
15	I have a clear understanding of what I am expected to learn in classes.	5.74 (1.51)	4.47 (1.33)	1.27
	Career Development (cluster)	5.79 (1.21)	4.75 (1.03)	1.04
11	I can develop the sufficient ability to use English at C1/ level 5.	5.83 (1.35)	4.74 (1.37)	1.09
12	I can develop my pedagogical knowledge for my teaching career later.	5.96 (1.39)	4.82 (1.30)	1.14
13	I can develop my pedagogical skills for my teaching career later.	5.84 (1.38)	4.80 (1.47)	1.04
14	My program offers me opportunities to develop soft skills.	5.72 (1.40)	4.34 (1.40)	1.38
16	My studies are closely related to my career development.	5.71 (1.39)	4.82 (1.37)	.89
17	Teaching practicum is useful for my career development.	5.71 (1.38)	4.95 (1.27)	.76

* Scale: The dual response questionnaire for students has two scales. On the left is the scale of seven points from "not important at all" to "very important"; on the right is the scale of seven points from "not satisfied at all" to "very satisfied"

To find out if the ETEP met the needs of students, an analysis was carried out on the responses of the 17 items in part two of the questionnaire, and a document review of Version 2015 of the ETEP's curriculum (Public University, 2015). The first step in conducting a needs assessment is to identify the needs of the learners, that is, by finding out the gap between the desired and current results (Witkin, 1984). The larger the gap, the lesser the ETEP meets students' needs or vice versa. The means of all the items vary between 4 and 6. Standard deviations fluctuate around the 1.3 value.

The specific level of how aligned the ETEP is with the needs of students is measured by looking at the performance gaps of the 17 items of part two in the questionnaire. As shown in Table 5 above, the largest performance gap belongs to item 14, with a gap of 1.38 on the ability of opportunities to develop soft skills, and the lowest one is item 1 with a gap of .67 on the students' sense of belonging. In other words, the ETEP did well in cultivating the students' sense of belonging but did not do enough to create opportunities to develop soft skills. The implications of these differences will be discussed in the next section.

The larger the gaps are, the higher the needs of students are on such aspects (Noel-Levitz, 2014, 2015; Messner, 2009). The average of the gaps is 1.037. A gap that is above such a level is considered to be high; one that is below the average is low, and one around the average level is medium.

Concerns for Students

Items around the "Concerns for students" (items 1 to 6) have performance gaps ranging from .67 to 1.14. Overall, this cluster produced a performance gap of 1.00. After dividing this with the pooled standard deviation of 1.15, the effect size of 0.87 was produced. This shows that the gap for concerns for students is large.

The first item (Item 1) has the lowest performance gap (.67) among the 17 items. This means that the ETEP had succeeded in fostering a sense of belonging amongst the students in the department where they were being trained. Surprisingly, the students also felt that their academic advisors did not care enough for them to succeed individually (Item 6: performance gap of 1.07). Likewise, they also felt that the faculty was not caring and helpful enough, with a performance gap of item 4 being much higher than the average level (Item 4: performance gap = 1.14). Students of the ETEP do not receive much support from their academic advisors due to the limited timetable. Students and academic advisors are scheduled to meet once a week (Public University, 2015).

Study Requirement

The study requirement has 5 items (items 7, 8, 9, 10, and 15) on course requirement and graduation requirement. Overall, the cluster scored a performance gap of 1.01. With the pooled standard deviation of 1.25, the effect size was found to be 0.82, showing that the performance gap for the study requirement is large.

Graduation requirements are decided by MOET. Besides accumulating 148 credits, students are required for graduation to obtain an English certificate at the C1 level of the CEFR, or level five of the VSTEP, and one other foreign language (Korean, Russian, Chinese, or French) at A2 of the CEFR or level 2 of the VSTEP. Each course of the ETEP has its requirement stated in its syllabus. Students are required to fulfill the requirement as part of the course assessment.

The ETEP does not meet students' needs to know about the course requirements, with its performance gap being very high (1.27), the second-highest among the 17 items. Students are not introduced to what they are expected to do before the course, and they do not even know what they need to master during the course for the final exam.

However, the graduation requirement is presented in the handbook for students, which is delivered to them on their first day at university. Students have to obtain a C1 level in English and an A2 level for one other foreign language. Therefore, the performance gap of item 8 on the clarity of graduation requirement in the student questionnaire is low (1.01). Yet, the requirement is quite high in comparison to the reality of the English teacher quality of language proficiency in Vietnam. It was reported in 2013 that the number of in-service teachers of English in Vietnam who met the English proficiency requirement was quite low. At that time, 83% of primary English teachers, 87.1% of lower secondary English teachers, and 91.8% of senior secondary English teachers did not meet the requirement of English language proficiency required by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (Nguyen, 2013). The performance gap of item 9 on the reasonability of the graduation requirement is 1.11. That is also the reason why students' needs for developing the ability to use English at C1 are also high (1.09), even though students have 52 credits for English language courses (Public University, 2015).

Career Development

Items 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, and 17 show the main objectives of the professional component of the program. This cluster produced a performance gap of 1.04. With the pooled standard deviation of 1.26, the effect size is calculated to be 0.83, showing a large performance gap in career development.

Ability to develop language proficiency

Item 11 on the ability of the students to develop English to C1 level has a high-performance gap of 1.09. It means that the ETEP does not satisfy these students' needs well. The total credits of the ETEP are 148, of which 52 are reserved for developing English language proficiency. A document review shows that in 2016 50 out of 56 students of the ETEP obtained a C1 certificate at the end of the program.

In the Vietnamese context, while the English proficiency of teachers of English is low (Nguyen, 2013; Le et al., 2017), developing students' English proficiency is, in fact, a major part of the English teacher education program. The ETEP designers need to make changes to the English language courses to enhance students' English language capacity.

Ability to develop pedagogical knowledge and skills

The ETEP has not met such students' needs to develop pedagogical knowledge and skills well, with the performance gaps on items 12 and 13 (1.14 and 1.04) above the average level. Students have limited time for methodological courses: 16 credits out of 148 credits for the whole program. With such limited time, program designers barely include basic courses for methodological knowledge in the ETEP's curriculum. Most of the English teacher education internationalization in Vietnam, including the ETEP, "focus much on the subject knowledge and theory without sufficiently providing the pre-service teachers with teaching skills" (H.T.M. Nguyen, 2017:11). According to one ETEP designer of methodological courses, the group of designers had to carefully consider the amount of time allocated for each course of the ETEP, and they regretted not being able to add some interesting courses of methodology, like curriculum development or syllabus design, to the ETEP curriculum. Besides, the time allocated for teaching practicum is only eight weeks at high schools. During the teaching practicum, each student has eight periods per week to teach pupils (Public University, 2015). However, the actual number depends on the school teachers who are the students' instructors during the teaching practicum. As a result, students are not given enough opportunities for methodological skill development during the program. This issue is common in many English teacher education internationalization in Vietnam and in Southeast Asian countries where the process of learning to teach is, in fact, the process of transferring knowledge and experience from experienced teachers to student teachers (Phan & Locke, 2016). Generally speaking, in Vietnam, teacher trainees have very little chance of studying methodology and of learning how to teach (H.T. M. Nguyen, 2017).

However, item 17 on teaching practicum has a very low-performance gap (.76). It means that the ETEP has been successful in meeting students' needs on teaching practicum. The ETEP has a

good teaching practicum as compared with other English teacher education internationalization in which the teaching practicum does not meet students' expectations (Le, 2011; Nguyen & Hudson, 2012; H. T. M. Nguyen, 2017).

Ability to develop soft skills

Item 14 on soft skill development has the highest performance gap (1.34), which denotes that this need of students is the least met by the ETEP. Except for the course "Critical thinking", the ETEP does not have any special courses to develop soft skills for students. The soft skills that the ETEP aims at providing students with are presentation skills, and cooperative skills (Public University, 2015). Besides, insufficient development of soft skills in the ETEP also comes from the students' lifelong habit of learning since they began their English studies at primary school. In Vietnam, students tend to learn by heart when they study English and other subjects (To, 2007). The outdated methodology, such as an audio-lingual teaching methodology with a teacher-centered approach or a grammar-translation approach, is still used in English teaching in Vietnam (Kam, 2002; H. T. M. Nguyen, 2012, 2017).

Implications

The needs assessment of the ETEP has provided useful information on the extent to which the program meets its students' needs. Overall, the program has met students' needs at a medium level. Yet, the level to which the program meets its students' needs varies. The ETEP has well-satisfied students' needs on the sense of belonging to the department and the usefulness of the teaching practicum. The need for developing soft skills is least met by the ETEP. The findings uncover the fact that there should be a stronger link between theory and practice in the ETEP so that it can satisfy students' needs on career development, especially their soft skills and pedagogical skills.

The connection between practice and theory can be strengthened by integrating technology into the curriculum (Docksatder, 1999; Dias & Atkinson, 2001; Afshari et al., 2009), improving the effectiveness of the teaching practicum and redesigning the framework for English teacher education internationalization (Le, 2013; Nguyen & Hudson, 2012; H. T. M. Nguyen, 2017), and integrating soft skill development into the curriculum in English teacher education internationalization in general and the ETEP in particular.

As suggested by a lot of the research, the effectiveness of the teaching practicum can be enhanced by a better mentoring process, and a better connection between lecturers and school teachers (Le, 2013; Nguyen & Hudson, 2012; H. T. M. Nguyen, 2017). During the teaching practicum, mentoring is "the most common mechanism used to develop pre-service teachers'

instructional practice in their classroom" (H. T. M. Nguyen, 2017, p.1). The quality of mentoring depends on many factors, such as the need for substantial investments of time, money, effort, and resources, and the roles of teachers as role models and mentors (Dyer & Nguyen, 1999; Saban, 2002; Nguyen & Baldauf, 2010).

Instead of relying too much on the mentoring of school teachers, other methods like peer mentoring, reflections, and individual self-evaluation should be carried out (H. T. M. Nguyen, 2017). Among these methods, peer mentoring is found to be effective in helping students to develop their pedagogical skills during the teaching practicum (H. T. M. Nguyen, 2017). To conduct peer mentoring, students are divided into small groups of around 4 to 5 students at high schools. Students in groups work together to review the lesson plans of their peers. The lesson plans are edited before they are used. The whole group also observes the lesson for evaluation. After that, the whole group discusses what is achieved and what should be improved for the lesson to be conducted better.

In addition, to increase the effectiveness of the teaching practicum, there must be a good connection between lecturers and school teachers, lecturers' in-time and effective support for students, and school teachers' sufficient mentoring for students. First, the connection between lecturers of the ETEP who support students during the teaching practicum at high schools and teachers mentoring students at schools should be strengthened. Currently, lecturers and school teachers often work somehow independently during the teaching practicum. Lecturers of the ETEP are responsible for supporting students in case they need it. School teachers have a more important role in helping students to learn how to teach through observation and actual teaching. Lecturers cannot intervene in what school teachers do, which may lead to the fact that instead of applying what the students have learned from the methodological courses into teaching, students tend to imitate the teaching method that they see school teachers adopting in their teaching (Le, 2013). It means that their development during a first teaching experience depends on the school teachers who tend to teach traditionally so that pupils can pass grammar-oriented examinations. Therefore, no matter how well students are prepared to teach in a modern way at the university, what they get when leaving the university may be the traditional methods of English language teaching (Le, 2001). Second, there should be discussions between lecturers and school teachers to decide what lessons and what methods are used before the student's observation. In this case, lecturers can control the teaching methods in the model lesson and can make sure that the real teaching at high schools that students are going to observe uses up-to-date teaching methods.

The ETEP designers need to consider making changes to its curriculum so that the students' needs to develop soft skills are better met. Pachauri and Yadav (2014) identify seven soft skills that English teachers should have: communicative skills, critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, teamwork force, life-long learning and information management, entrepreneurial skills,

ethics, morals and professionalism, and leadership skills. These skills should be included in courses of the ETEP.

Pachauri and Yadav (2014) suggest three models for integrating soft skills development into the curriculum: "stand-alone subject model", "embedded model" and a combination between "stand-alone subject model" and "embedded model". "Stand alone subject model" is the one that uses the approach to provide students with opportunities to develop soft skills through specific courses on certain kinds of soft skills. "Embedded model" uses the approach of integrating soft skills throughout the teaching and learning activities of the courses of the curriculum. The last model is the combination of the first two models where there are both courses for soft skill development and soft skills are integrated into the other courses of the curriculum. Soft skills can be integrated into the curriculum of the ETEP by using the "embedded model". For certain courses, the ETEP designers can select some appropriate skills to integrate. For example, communicative skills can be developed through presentations and discussions in language courses. Critical thinking and problem-solving skills are achieved through projects and group assignments in pedagogical courses. Furthermore, to make sure lecturers organize such activities in class, specific activities to develop certain soft skills should be specified in both the course requirements and assessment.

Finally, the integration of technology into the ETEP curriculum is also one solution to improve the ETEP. According to Schmidt (1998), there are two possible approaches to integrate technology into teacher education internationalization. The first is offering an instructional technology course. This has been used by the ETEP, which has one 30 period course on technology in education (Public University, 2015). Yet, this approach proves to be ineffective as it focuses on teaching students how to use technology rather than how to apply it in real teaching contexts. The second approach is to integrate technology into all courses of the teacher education program. This approach is, in fact, suitable for the ETEP because it not only facilitates the teaching and learning process by providing more practice opportunities but also familiarizes students with technology use in education. Yet, as lecturers of the ETEP are not themselves good at technology in education (Ho, 2014), it is suggested that training on technology in education for lecturers be held to help them to have enough experience to be able to apply technology in their lessons. Those lecturers who are responsible for methodological courses should especially be required to use as much technology in their lessons as possible. In addition, the university can encourage lecturers to apply technology in their lessons through policies such as giving lecturers bonuses for their technology application.

Conclusion

Generally, the performance gaps for the concerns for students, study requirements, and career development are found to be large. The level to which the program meets its students' needs varies. The ETEP has well-satisfied students' needs on the sense of belonging to the department, and the usefulness of the teaching practicum. Among all the needs, the need for developing soft skills is least met by the ETEP. The findings uncover that there should be a stronger link between theory and practice in the ETEP so that it can better satisfy students' needs on career development.

Given the findings above, suggestions were made for the improvement of the future implementation of the ETEP and also other English teacher education internationalization. The gap between practice and theory can be bridged by integrating technology and soft skill development into the curriculum of the ETEP courses; enhancing the implementation of the teaching practicum with systematic monitoring mechanisms, peer mentoring, reflections, and individual self-evaluation; and redesigning the framework for English teacher education internationalization.

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