

Teaching and Doing Research in Higher Education Settings: An Exploratory Study of Vietnamese Overseas-Trained Returnees

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Abstract : A large number of Vietnamese lecturers leave their home institutions every year to pursue an education in Australia and in other countries and most of whom return home to careers back in the Vietnamese work context. However, to the authors' best knowledge, there is little empirical knowledge about these Vietnamese returnees. Much less is about how these overseas-trained returnees continue doing research while taking a lecturing role, though research has recently received growing heightened attention in Vietnamese Higher Education institutions and returnees are an important source of human resources. The research is mixed-methods in nature with questionnaires and interviews as the main instruments of data collection. Seven-six Vietnamese returnees working from a broad range of disciplines from different higher education institutions in central Vietnam completed a questionnaire on their perceived constraints and affordances in teaching and continuing doing research upon return from their overseas education. Twenty-five of these returnees took part in a subsequent in-depth interview which lasted from 30 minutes to an hour, which further seeks understanding of their lived individual experiences and stories. The overall results show that time constraint, heavy teaching loads, and varied administrative and familial roles are among inhibiting factors. However, these factors were more constraining for some returnees more than others. Their motivations to do research varied, from passion to work pressure and self-perceived responsibilities. Above all, these were mediated by personal, institutional and disciplinary contexts. The paper argues for a nuanced understanding of returnee academics' life as complex and layered with the multiple identities they associated themselves with and the differing trajectories they embarked on as to what they perceived important as a university lecturer. Implications for Higher Education management and administration and professional development are addressed.

Keywords : Vietnamese overseas-trained returnees, higher education, teaching, doing research, constraints, affordances

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