CONTESTED IMAGINED COMMUNITIES: HIGHER EDUCATION FOR ETHNIC
MINORITY STUDENTS IN VIETNAM

by

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ABSTRACT

As a country with 54 ethnic groups, including 53 officially designated "ethnic minority groups," Vietnam has recognized the importance of enhancing education for ethnic minorities. However, despite the government's efforts to increase educational opportunities for ethnic minority students, the latter often do not have access to the same education as their counterparts of the major ethnic group, the Kinh. In this study, the concept of "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991) is applied to analyze national governmental policies on ethnic minorities, curricular structure in the Department of Ethnic Minority Cultures at the Hanoi University of Culture, Vietnam, and the perspectives of professors and students in the department. Three months of field research were conducted in Vietnam, and included: (a) an analysis of national and institutional policy documents, (b) observation at the university, and (c) interviews with professors and ethnic minority students enrolled in the program.

The findings of this study show that imagined communities envisioned for ethnic minority students by the government, professors and students themselves are diverse and contested. The contestation of imagined communities on higher education for ethnic minority students in Vietnam shows a clear intersection between power and knowledge. Through education, the government, with its power, has great influence on educational activities which affect the identities of ethnic minority students. Educational settings, in some sense, become the place of social and cultural reproduction where "organic" knowledge of ethnic minority students is discounted. Finally, this study gives a description of my personal transformation after conducting this research. It shows how this research has changed my own mindset and thinking about ethnic minority cultures in general and higher education for ethnic minority students in Vietnam in particular.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, systems of higher education have grown more dramatically in Asia than in any other region in the world (Altbach & Umakoshi, 2004). Like China, Malaysia and Korea, Vietnam has focused much attention on developing its national education system. Education is considered a national priority for the country's long-term development. In fact, the *Education Law* in the *1992 Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam* states that "education and training is the nation's foremost priority" (cited in Pham & Fry, 2004, p. 313). The focus on educational policy development includes a strong emphasis on higher education.

As a multi-ethnic country with 54 ethnic groups, including 53 officially designated "ethnic minority groups," Vietnam has also recognized the importance of enhancing education for ethnic minority people.[1] *Resolution 22/1999* of Vietnam's Political Ministry codes prioritizes "training ethnic minority staff" as one of its policy objectives (Tran, 2005). Ethnic minority education in Vietnam is designed and controlled by the central government, and the education of ethnic minority students in Vietnamese universities has become a pressing national demand. This is especially true for provinces which lack human resources and have a high proportion of ethnic minorities. However, despite the government's efforts to increase educational opportunities for ethnic minority students, the latter often do not have access to the same educational opportunities as their counterparts from the major ethnic group, the Kinh.

In academic literature to date, researchers have explored various issues concerning Vietnamese ethnic minorities such as culture, politics, language, living standards, and lifestyles (Dang, Chu & Luu, 2000; Evans, 1995; Hickey, 1993; McElwee, 2004; Michaud,

2000; Salemink, 2003; Trinh, 1985; Wandel, 1997). However, literature on higher education for ethnic minority students is scarce. Some research focuses on primary and secondary education of ethnic minority students (Kampe, 1997; Pholsena, 2003), but not on higher education. There is in fact a great need for research on ethnic minority education at all levels, including higher education. As Das (2001) has suggested: "the survival of indigenous culture and language is closely related with the educational policies of the State" (p.80). Moreover, Kanno (2003) has noted that educational institutions are "powerful social agents that can create images of communities for their [students'] future and give these visions flesh and blood" (p.295).

In Western countries, there is abundant research on Aboriginal education. Canada and New Zealand are examples of such countries. The history of Aboriginal education in Canada has been analyzed in a considerable body of research over the past several decades (Atleo, 1991; Cardinal, 1999; Kirkness, 1999; Mallea, 2000). Similarly, there is much research regarding the history and the evolution of successful Maori education in New Zealand (Jenkins & Jones, 2000; Pihama, Cram & Walker, 2002; Roberts, 1999; Simon, 2000; Smith, 2000). Some specific issues have been studied in both countries: the self-determination principle in education (Abele, Dittburner, & Graham, 2000; Cardinal, 1999; Castellano, Davis & Lahache, 2000; Hampton, 2000; Ignas, 2004; McLeod, 2003; Pihama, Cram & Walker, 2002; Smith, 1990; Sterling, 2002); the importance of advancing Aboriginal languages in education (Battiste, 1998; Bishop, Berryman & Richardson 2002; Gardner & Jimmie, 1989; Kirkness, 1989, 1998, 2002; McLeod, 2003; Sachdev, 1998); and curriculum issues and effective teaching and learning in Aboriginal education (Antone, 2003; Bishop,

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[1] The term "ethnic minority groups" is discussed on page 7 of this chapter.

2003; Cardinal, 1999; Castellano, Davis, & Lahache, 2000; McLeod, 2003; Menzies, Archibald & Smith, 2004; Ignas, 2004; LaFrance, 2000; Roberts, 1999; Sterling, 2002).

Although there is a well-developed body of scholarship on Aboriginal education in Western countries, there is a large gap in such research in developing countries, including Vietnam. There are some possible reasons for this gap. First, developing countries in general may have limited financial resources and choose not to give first priority to ethnic minority issues. In the case of Vietnam, because the country has experienced a long period of war with the United States and France, a significant amount of Western academic research has been related to the history of these wars and recovery from them. Ethnic minority issues have not been the primary concern. Also, the country has not been open and accessible to Western researchers until recently. Most of the documents written about ethnic minority issues in Vietnam are in the Vietnamese language, which may cause difficulties for Western researchers and may not be readily accessible to all who study higher education. The present study, therefore, is important and timely, and will fill a gap in the field of higher education for ethnic minority students in Vietnam. Research findings are expected to inform government policy-makers and, if addressed adequately, may respond to the identified needs of ethnic minority students and their communities. Finally, the study is of much value to concerned international researchers in the field, adding to discussions of viable models of higher education for ethnic minority students in Vietnam and beyond.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework which is used in this research study encompasses the notion of "imagined communities," defined by Benedict Anderson (1991). Anderson asserts that a nation is socially constructed and ultimately imagined by the people who perceive

themselves as part of that group. Blackledge (2003) argues that imagined communities are constantly developing, shifting and changing, and being re-imagined by both dominant and subordinate groups. Identities are negotiated and renegotiated; they are contested along lines of power and interest. Pavlenko (2003) maintains imagination can be seen not primarily as a personal characteristic, but as a "terrain of struggle between different and often incompatible ideologies of language and identity in particular sociohistoric contexts" (p. 253).

The concept of imagined communities can be used not only with entire nations, but also with virtually all communities. In particular, Kanno (2003), Blackledge (2003), Norton (2001) and others demonstrate that the notion of imagined communities can be applied to educational institutions. Wenger (1998) likewise focuses on the human ability to relate, through imagination, to groups of people beyond our immediate social networks; imagination involves a sense of belonging to a particular community of practice. Norton (2001) further argues that an individual's learning is shaped not only by the individual's current social involvements, but also by their future, imagined affiliations. As Norton sees it, learners envision imagined communities for themselves and invest in their learning in a manner which will enable them access their imagined communities of their future. Kanno (2003) demonstrates that the imagined communities envisioned by educational institutions for their students have a strong influence on the pedagogical policies and practices they adopt, and will also shape, expand and restrict the potential, future imagined communities of their students. In this current research, based on these notions of identity, belonging and participation in imagined communities (Pavlenko, 2003, Anderson, 1991, Wenger, 1998, Norton, 2001 and Kanno, 2003), I try to understand the multiple and contested imagined communities of ethnic minority students in higher education in Vietnam.

Purpose of the Study

This study explores the imagined communities of ethnic minority students enrolled in the BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures in the Hanoi University of Culture, as these are envisioned by government policies (at the national and institutional levels), by faculty members of the Department of Ethnic Minority Cultures, and by ethnic minority students themselves. The imagined communities of ethnic minority students are in fact diverse. In government policy, students are imagined to be key cultural staff in ethnic minority areas, and will be well versed in terms of ideology, and moral and professional knowledge. However, in practice, there are multiple sites of struggle. For example, the government, as represented by the Ministry of Education and Training, controls the structure and curriculum of university programs. This means, for example, that university programs are fixed in terms of allowable time for each section of the program (i.e., introductory and professional sections). This affects university and faculty members' decisions regarding content and the amount of time for courses they think are appropriate for students in the program. Students themselves question the design of the current program, the content of the courses, the balance between theory and practice, and the teaching methods.

This study is conceived, first of all, out of personal interest. As a Vietnamese person sponsored by the Vietnamese government to pursue graduate studies in Canada, my first ideas for my M.A. thesis project naturally leaned towards a topic related to my home country. Before coming to Canada I worked at the Hanoi University of Culture as an English language instructor; this became the inspiration for wanting to conduct research in a setting with which I was well acquainted. Another important reason is that, since I came to Canada to study, my perception of "culture" has changed. As a member of the majority Kinh ethnic group, I used

to believe that the notion of Vietnamese culture simply meant all of the cultural values of the Kinh people. I was not really aware of the cultures of the other 53 ethnic groups in Vietnam. However, when I came to Canada to study, I witnessed the great concern that people in the field of education feel about indigenous issues. It was then that I became aware of the important role that the 53 other ethnic groups in Vietnam play in contributing to the diversity and distinctiveness of Vietnamese culture. This recognition led me to understand my MA research as a chance to learn more about the cultures, people, and lives of other ethnic groups in my country and to work on a topic both interesting to me and hopefully meaningful to these ethnic groups.

This study ultimately aims to explore the possible ways through which Vietnam can provide more relevant and effective education in general, and higher education in particular, for ethnic minority students. To do so, I investigated the different ways in which ethnic minority students, their instructors, and the government envisions the goals of higher education for minority students, and whether or not the current program and policies in fact lead to meeting those goals. This thesis is specifically aimed at examining these multifaceted viewpoints on higher education for ethnic minority students, which are embodied in the BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures in the Department of Ethnic Minority Cultures at the Hanoi University of Culture. The Department of Ethnic Minority Cultures is the only such department in Vietnam. The BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures is aimed at educating staff who will work in cultural fields in ethnic minority areas. Students who graduate from the program are expected to be able to: (1) study, collect and preserve the cultural values of ethnic minority areas; (2) organize and hold cultural activities in ethnic minority areas; and (3) evaluate cultural activities in ethnic minority areas. Most of the students of this program

are ethnic minorities themselves, yet students from the major ethnic group, the Kinh, are also eligible to study in the Department. This study focuses mostly on the first group of learners – ethnic minority students, but also includes viewpoints from two Kinh majority students.

Research Questions

This research addresses the following questions:

1. What imagined communities does the Vietnamese Government envision for ethnic minority students in national policy and through the BA program in Ethnic Minority Culture at the Hanoi University of Culture?

2. What imagined communities do the faculty members in the Department of Ethnic Minority Cultures envision for ethnic minority students currently enrolled in the BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures?

3. What imagined communities do ethnic minority students currently involved in the BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures at the Hanoi University of Culture envision for themselves?

4. How are the imagined communities for ethnic minority students envisioned above similar or different; how are they contested?

Terminology

"Ethnic minority groups" is the official term used by the Vietnamese Government to refer to the 53 ethnic groups in Vietnam, not including the Kinh ethnic group. However, there are many other unofficial terminologies for these groups, such as "ethnic groups with few people," "mountain people," and "highlanders."

There is much discussion and debate about these different terms. Some people think that the term "ethnic minority groups" put ethnic minority people in a weaker position

because in Vietnamese, "minority" basically refers to a small number of people; however, it can also refer to something which is not in a strong position. For example, when something needs to be decided, the "majority" often beats the "minority." The terminology "ethnic groups with few people" may be correct within the Vietnamese nation because, out of 54 ethnic groups in Vietnam, the Kinh group accounts for 86.2% of the total, while the remaining 53 ethnic groups account for only 13.8% of the nation's population. However, compared with some other countries in the world, some "ethnic minority groups" in Vietnam have an even larger population in absolute terms. For example, the Tay ethnic group in Vietnam has a population of 1,190,000 people. This represents a population, for example, larger than the entire population of Brunei (379,444 people). Similarly, the Thai ethnic group in Vietnam, with a population of 1,040,000, is significantly larger than the entire population of Iceland, with 299,388 people. Furthermore, the terms "mountain people" or "highlanders" are imprecise. Although it is true that most "ethnic minority groups" live in the highlands or mountainous areas of Vietnam, there are also other ethnic people who live in the lowlands of Vietnam. These include the Khmer ethnic group in the South of Vietnam, the Cham ethnic group in the provinces of Ninh Thuan, Binh Thuan, and the An Giang and the Hoa ethnic group in Ho Chi Minh City and in other provinces in the South of Vietnam. This thesis adopts the term "ethnic minority students" as a means of understanding official constructions of identity around the term.

Overview of the Thesis

The thesis is comprised of nine chapters. Chapter One – the Introduction, describes the context, purposes and the rationale of the study. Chapter Two provides background information concerning ethnic minority groups, the current status of cultural life in ethnic

minority areas in Vietnam, and an overview of the higher education system and education for ethnic minority students in Vietnam. Chapter Three comprises the theoretical framework and a review of literature on Aboriginal education in Canada and New Zealand. Chapter Four explains the methods used in the study. It provides a description of the research setting, the research participants, and the process of data collection and analysis. The study's limitations and assumptions are also included in this chapter. Chapter Five presents the findings of the research from government policies (national level and institutional level). Chapter Six depicts the findings from interviews with the faculty members in the Department of Ethnic Minority Cultures at the Hanoi University of Culture. Chapter Seven gives a description of the findings from interviews with the students. Chapter Eight contains a discussion of the findings in relation to hegemony, counter-hegemony, and imagined communities. The ninth and final chapter gives a description of my personal transformation after conducting this research and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND

This chapter provides general background information for the study. It portrays some of the main characteristics of ethnic minority groups and cultures in Vietnam, and outlines recent changes and trends. The chapter also discusses the demand for cultural staff in ethnic minority areas. The chapter concludes with an introduction to the higher education system in Vietnam and education for ethnic minority students in particular.

Ethnic Minority Groups in Vietnam

Vietnam is a multi-ethnic country with a population of approximately 84 million. Fifty-three ethnic groups account for 13.8 % of the total population of the country, with the remainder made up of the largest ethnic group, the Kinh.

Ethnic minority groups live in various parts of Vietnam, mostly scattered over mountainous areas (covering two-thirds of the country's territory) spreading from the North to the South. Some ethnic minority groups also live in the lowlands. For example, the Hoa, Khmer, and Cham ethnic groups live in lowland areas in provinces in the Southwest, and in Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan provinces in the mid-South of Vietnam. Most ethnic groups, except for the Mon-Khmer, migrated to Vietnam from China and in that sense are not considered indigenous minorities. The people of the Central Highlands, generally Austronesian or Mon-Khmer speakers, more properly fit the term indigenous peoples.[2] They are commonly acknowledged to be the original inhabitants of the mountainous regions in South-western Vietnam (Pholsena, 2003). After 1954 (the liberation year of Northern Vietnam) and 1975 (the Vietnamese national liberation year) increasing numbers of Kinh

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[2] After 1975, the area was renamed after Tay Nguyen, or "Western Plateau". The Central Highlands officially include the four provinces of Kontum, Gia Lai (Pleiku), Dac Lac (Buon Ma Thuot) and Lam Dong (Da Lat). But many of the Annam Cordillera upland areas, or Truong Son, and their indigenous populations are located in other provinces bordering these four.

ethnic people moved to mountainous areas to live. Kinh ethnic people who have recently moved to mountainous areas now account for more than 56% of the total population in the Northern mountains, more than 60% in the Central highlands, and more than 80% in the South-Central highlands (Le, 2005). The fact that ethnic minority groups and the Kinh live together can foster better understanding between ethnic groups. On the other hand, conflicts arise and ethnic minority culture can be heavily influenced by the Kinh.

The ethnic minority groups speak languages belonging to three ethno-linguistic families: the Austro-Asiatic linguistic family, the Austronesian linguistic family, and the Sino-Tibetan language family. Each family consists of various language groups (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1. Ethnic Groups, Language Family and Group

	Language Family	Language Group	Ethnic Groups
1.	Austro-Asiatic	Viet-Muong	Kinh, Muong, Tho, Chut
		Mon-Khmer	Khmer, Bana, Xo-dang, Hre, Co-ho, Mnong, Xtieng, Kho-mu, Bru-Van Kieu, Co-tu, Gie-trieng, Ta-oi, Ma, Co, Cho-ro, Xinh-mun, Khang, Mang, Brau, Ro-mam, O-du
		Tay-Thai	Tay, Thai, Nung, San Chay, Giay, Lao, Lu, Bo Y
		Kadai or Co Lao	La Chi, Co Lao, La Ha, Pu Peo
		Hmong-Dao	Hmong, Dao, Pa Then
2.	Austronesian	Malayo-Polynesian	Gia-rai, E-de, Cham, Ra-glai, Chu-ru
3.	Sino-Tibetan	Han Group	Hoa, San Diu, Ngai
		Tibeton-Burman	Ha Nhi, Phu La, La Hu, Lo Lo, Cong, Si La

Source: Dang, N, V., Chu, T. S., & Luu, H., 2000

The location of the language families is shown in Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1. Vietnam's Official Ethnographic Map
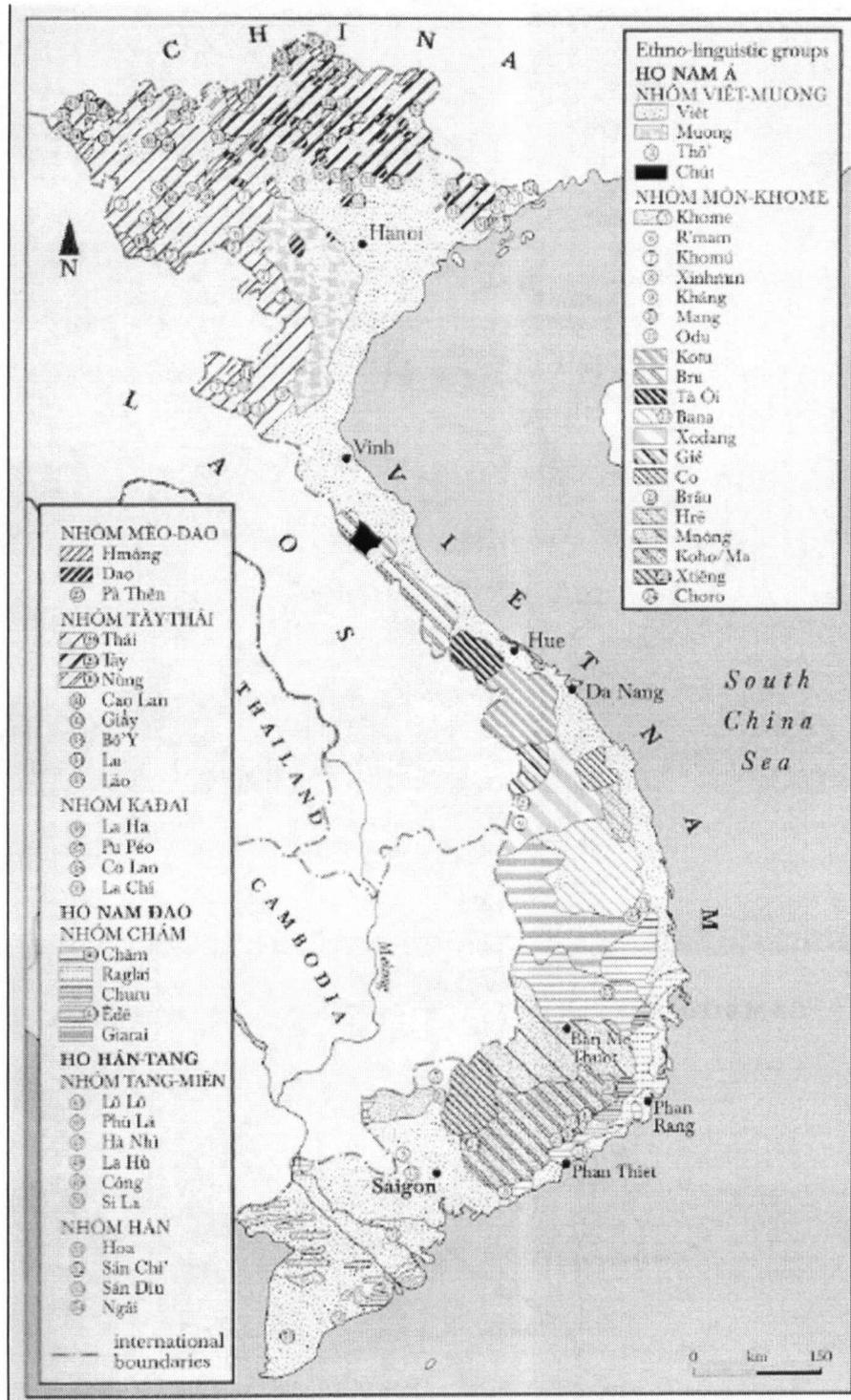
Source: Salemink, 2003, p. xxv

The fact that most ethnic minority groups live in mountainous areas is one of the factors that affects the economic situation of these groups. Traditional subsistence methods of ethnic minority groups in Vietnam include: (1) wet rice agriculture of the ethnic minority groups that live in valleys, at the foot of mountains, in delta areas, and at the edge of coastal areas; (2) dry rice agriculture and slash and burn agriculture of ethnic minority groups that live in the mid-lands and highlands; (3) hunting and gathering; (4) raising livestock; and (5) production of handicrafts. In general, the economic status of ethnic minority groups is much lower than the national, regional and international levels of economic development.

Ethnic Minority Cultures

Vietnamese culture in general and ethnic minority cultures in particular are cultures of an agricultural civilization. This can be seen through the main types of subsistence in ethnic minority areas as mentioned above. In addition, this characteristic is expressed through folklore religions, which are largely based on the activities of rice cultivation. In most of the ethnic minority groups there are folklore notions of the natural world, spirits, and agriculture such as the God of rice fields, the God of terrace fields, etc. (Trinh, Nguyen, Le, & Nguyen, 2004). The culture of agricultural civilization is also expressed through traditional food and drink. Much of this is made of rice and is used in celebrations such as the New Year holidays, festivals, funerals and weddings.

The cultures of ethnic minority groups can also be identified with the values of pre-industrial civilization. Ethnic minority groups have created many tangible cultural artifacts, which express distinctive handicraft skills. These values can be seen through tangible cultures concerning architecture, house-wares, furniture, and clothes.[3] For example, the

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[3] Tangible culture comprises material products made by human beings to meet their material demands. It consists of the results of the activities in the following fields: construction, houses, clothes, food and drink and

Khmer, Thai, Muong, Tay, Ede, Cham, and several other ethnic groups all have unique customs regarding the design and assembly of different parts of domestic and religious architecture. These values also appear in the skills of weaving fabric with beautiful and harmonious designs and colors.

Ethnic minority cultures and the village structure may be contrasted with the more modern Kinh culture. For example, in ethnic minority groups, personal assets are not as highly valued as they are among those from the ethnic majority. Meanwhile, the community spirit in living and working is more appreciated in ethnic minority cultures. In general, traditional customs of the communities affect most of the activities of community members. In a village, there are not only people who have relations bound by the same line of ancestry, but there are also people who have neighbor relationships with the members in the village. Each village is limited by a specific area and all the members of the village have the responsibility to conform to the village's principles.

The cultures of ethnic minority groups are known as diverse and distinctive folklore cultures. In ethnic minority communities there is a system of beliefs, which is transferred from generation to generation, concerning everyday life activities which link to the human life expectancy cycle, the cultivation cycle, and the weather cycle. These cultural values are considered folklore culture by researchers. Also, according to Trinh, Nguyen, Le, and Nguyen (2004), among 53 ethnic minority groups, more than half do not have a writing system. Therefore, ethnic minority cultures are mainly passed down orally. Elders in ethnic minority groups often tell their descendants traditional legends. In this way, folklore

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means of transportation. Intangible culture comprises products made by human beings to meet their spiritual demands. It consists of languages, belief, religion, literature, folklore arts, folklore festivals, folklore knowledge, folklore games, organization of family, family relationship, tradition of raising children, marriage custom, and funeral customs (Hoang, 2004).

literature and knowledge of ethnic minority groups is transferred from generation to generation.

In general, ethnic minority cultures in Vietnam are diverse but also interact with each other. The ethnic minority groups that live in different areas of Vietnam (Thai, Hmong, Muong, Khang, Khomu, Mang in the Northwest; Tay, Nung Dao in the Northeast, Cham in the Mid-South and Khmer in the South) have created "tangible culture" and "intangible culture." Moreover, cultural diversity can be recognized in the culture of each particular ethnic group in the above mentioned areas. Ethnic minority groups who live in the same area (Northwest, Northeast, and the South), share the same natural environment and geographical conditions, but have different cultural practices and beliefs concerning housing, clothes, festivals, marriage, and funerals. However, ethnic minority cultures in Vietnam also have interactions with each other and with the Kinh culture as well. This interaction can be seen through cultural relationships between the Kinh and the Tay-Thai, Nam Dao, and Mon-Khmer; between the Thai and the Mon-Khmer in the Northwest and Mid-North; and between the Cham and the Nam Dao and Mon-Khmer in Truong Son- Tay Nguyen (Trinh et al 2004).

Changes in Ethnic Minority Cultures

In recent years, ethnic minority cultures have been changing in multiple sites. This can be seen in both tangible and intangible cultures.

As far as tangible culture is mentioned, there have been changes in houses, clothes, and food and drink. Traditional cultures are being lost very quickly; meanwhile outside cultures tend to be accepted by ethnic communities' members quite easily. For example, in the past, the Mong ethnic people used to have a tradition of living in houses made of clay. However, in recent years, many houses are being built with different kinds of material like

concrete, and with different designs. This change can be seen in the technology of assembling joints for houses and the decoration of roof-tops with different types of carved patterns. Some houses even have the year when they are built on the surface of the houses. Ethnic minority groups belonging to the Mon-Khmer language group had a tradition of building Rong houses.[4] However, in recent years, this kind of house has been changing in design as well as in building technology. For example, among the Rong houses which are available now, only 40% of them still have the traditional design (Trinh et al, 2004). Many ethnic minority groups have also changed their clothing styles. In some ethnic minority groups, traditional clothes have been gradually replaced by modern clothes. Traditional clothes are not used as casual clothes anymore but are used only as ceremonial clothes.

Intangible cultures have also been lost in oblivion. For example, many folklore festivals, which play a very important role in spiritual life of ethnic minority communities, have lost their traditional characteristics. This is caused partly by government policies that have existed for quite a long period of time in the past, but are no longer in place. In some local provinces, some cultural activities as well as some folklore festivals were not allowed to be held because they were considered outdated, and even superstitious. After many years of being prohibited, many folklore customs have been either fading or have disappeared. Recently, the Government's perception of the position of folklore festivals has changed and some traditional festivals of some ethnic minority groups have been gradually restored. However, the generation of people who typically used to participate in folklore festivals has either become old and weak or died, meanwhile the young generations find it unfamiliar to

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[4] Rong house is a kind of communal house, where communities' members often gather together whenever they have common events.

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participate in traditional folklore festivals. Therefore, some folklore festivals have been restored, but have lost a lot of their distinctive traditional characteristics.

Moreover, as recent research shows, the growing tourist industry has had a lot of influence on the lives of ethnic minority people. On the one hand, the tourist industry brings in more income to ethnic minorities; on the other hand, it is a considerable menace to the traditional way of life of ethnic minority groups, mainly those living in northern Vietnam. Many young people have spent money that they earned from the tourist industry to buy mainstream clothes and food and they have gradually become unfamiliar with traditional ways of life. There are several other visible negative impacts of the growing tourist industry in northwest Vietnam. For example, tourism has been implicated in the growing number of street children who do not go to school and run a high risk of being sexually abused and infected by AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, or involved in drug trafficking or other criminal activities (Pham & Lam, 2000). Several experts claim that tourism damages the communities of ethnic minorities more than it benefits them (DiGrigorio, Pham & Yasui, as cited in Pham & Lam, 2000) and that there may be irreversible negative impacts of tourism (Gringley, as cited in Pham & Lam, 2000).

The growing flow of tourists not only endangers the existence of ethnic minority groups and undermines the established structure of traditional society, the same can be said about the permanent loss of language and cultural traditions by younger generations under the increasing influence of mass-media, urban life-style and new types of industry that often conflicts with traditional cultural values (Pham & Lam, 2000). Listening to the Elders of the communities telling legends, or reading poems is a kind of cultural activity, which does not

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attract young generation like it did in the past. Folklore culture, therefore, has been gradually lost.

Demand for Cultural Staff in Ethnic Minority Areas

For quite a long time, the Vietnamese government's strategy for human resource development for ethnic minority areas has concentrated on training staff in management, leadership and economics (Trinh, Nguyen, Le & Nguyen, 2004). However, there is still a great shortage of qualified cultural staff for ethnic minority areas and the demand for training cultural staff has become more and more acute. This cultural staff today plays a very important role in preserving and developing cultural values of ethnic minority areas. For example they are responsible for organizing cultural activities, improving conditions of ethnic minority people and propagandizing the government's policies.

In the last few years, although the government has paid much attention to training staff in different areas including cultural staff for ethnic minority areas, these areas still face a number of problems. The staff who work in ethnic minority areas have different levels of education: higher education, high school and even middle school. Some provinces do not have any staff at all with higher education degrees. In general, staff who work in these areas are often not very competent. Moreover, because of the scarcity of staff in other fields, many civil servants and staff with degrees in culture are now working in other fields that are not suitable to their education. Also, there are many more men than women staff (Trinh, et al, 2004).

At present, in ethnic minority areas, the percentage of staff that have a higher education degree is still very low compared to other areas. This percentage accounts for 12.3% in the mountainous areas in the North, 9.2% in the Mid-North, 9.5% in the Middle,

2.9% in the highlands, and 11.7 % in the Mekong river delta. (Trinh, Nguyen, Le & Nguyen, 2004). The above data shows that the demand of higher education training for civil servants and staff in different fields, including the cultural field for ethnic minority areas, is urgent and essential. However, even though I refer to there being a high demand for qualified cultural staff in ethnic minority areas, the actual number of positions is limited by the government because the government often provides the salary for these positions.

Higher Education in Vietnam

A report issued by the Institute of International Education Vietnam (2004) gives a comprehensive description of the higher education system in Vietnam as follows. In Vietnam, at the national level, the most important organization responsible for the educational sector is the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). MOET is divided into numerous departments, and the Department of Higher Education is one of the important parts. MOET wields significant power over national education and handles a number of tasks including: (1) promulgating regulations concerning curriculum; (2) textbook drafting and publishing; (3) student enrolment and management of educational activities; (4) academic assessment procedures and granting of degrees; (5) infrastructure and facilities maintenance; (6) staffing and personnel education; (7) design of projects of development in the field of education; and (8) providing proposals to the government for the regulation of education matters such as scholarships, construction of universities, and study abroad (p. 4).

However, the management and financing of education and training has recently become more decentralized in Vietnam. Decentralization can be seen first at the functional departments in the central government responsible for education and training. Although MOET still plays a preeminent role, many institutions in Vietnam now fall under the

jurisdiction of other ministries and government agencies. For example, the colleges and the universities of culture and arts specialty, such as Hanoi University of Culture and Hanoi Music Conservatory, are under the control of the Ministry of Culture and Information, while Hanoi Medical University is managed by the Ministry of Health.

Moreover, the same trend can be seen if we take into consideration the multitude of levels of the responsible governmental agencies. In higher education and vocational/technical education, with the exception of universities, the role of provincial governments in running educational institutions is at least as large as the role of the central government.

There are a total of 214 colleges and universities in Vietnam. Among these, there are 87 universities and 127 junior colleges.[5] Most of the junior colleges and universities are situated in big cities like Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. However, because of the dramatic increases in student enrollment, the Government has allowed the opening of many junior colleges and universities in different provinces and even several junior colleges and universities in mountainous areas. These included Tay Bac University, Thai Nguyen University, Lai Chau Teacher Training Junior College, Lao Cai Teacher Training Junior College, Tuyen Quang Teacher Training Junior College and Lang Son Teacher Training Junior College.

There are two main types of junior colleges and universities in Vietnam: public and "non-public" (that is, combining the structural features or public and private universities). However, the majority are public institutions. Among 127 junior colleges, there are 119 public junior colleges and only 8 non-public junior colleges. Similarly, among 87 universities, 68 are public and 19 non-public.

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[5] In Vietnam junior colleges grant students with only associate degrees, not BA degrees.

The universities can be divided into "specialized universities" and "multi-disciplinary" universities. Specialized universities focus on a single area of study such as Foreign Trade, Economics, Culture, and Law. Multi-disciplinary universities are typically "mega-universities," including several member-colleges operating in different academic fields.

At this institutional level, governance can be briefly described as follows. Each university is administered by a rector who is chosen by faculty members and serves a 4-year term with a possible extension depending on faculty vote, with no limit to the number of terms possible. The universities are divided into departments, each of which is under a department head who is responsible for all administrative and academic matters within the department. Since 1989, universities have been able to choose their own rector on the basis the academic staff's votes, but the result must be ratified by MOET.

Types of Training Programs

In Vietnam, at present, there are several different types of training programs. The typical training programs that are found in the higher education system are reported by the Institute of International Education Vietnam (2004) as below:

Full-time training programs. These training programs are for students who gain university admission through the examination process.[6] The curriculum used in this full-time training program is often designed by the faculty of each university with a wide range of different specialties. However, the curriculum needs to be examined and obtain final approval from Ministry of Education and Training.

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[6]Admission to universities is two-part process coordinated through Ministry of Education and Training. Students must first pass the Secondary School Leaving Examination (SSLE). Students who pass SSLE will then take the university entrance exams (UEE). UEE are divided into several categories according to the fields of study the student plans to pursue and the university offering that subject.

In-service training program. These training programs are for students who are undertaking an abbreviated course while employed. For the most part, these students are civil servants sponsored by their government offices. They are studying to upgrade their skills and to prepare for more difficult or more responsible positions upon completion of their training programs. The curriculum undertaken in this mode is usually focused on more practical experience rather than theoretical or academic issues.

Short-term training programs. These training programs are for students who have completed two or three years of secondary technical education or vocational education training and have a diploma or certificate. They can undertake upgrading courses and obtain a degree after three years rather than the four or five years required by full-time students entering directly from upper-secondary school. The curriculum used in this type of training program focuses on equipping students with the needed training, considered equivalent to the knowledge obtained by full-time students.

Specialized or retraining programs. These programs are for students receiving "upgrading." This group of students includes those who graduated from higher education institutions in the past and are pursuing training or re-training, often in subjects that were not available previously, in order to deal more effectively with their current jobs or to prepare themselves for new jobs. The curriculum can be flexible according to the demand of the learners. For example, computer programming is a common subject now being studied by people who graduated from various engineering and science fields.

Education for Ethnic Minorities

Le (2005) gives an overall picture of the policies of the Vietnamese Communist Party and the government on different fields including education for ethnic minority people

through different periods of time. The author reports on the main content of the policies as well as the context of the appearance of these policies. In the following section, I will summarize his work on the Vietnamese Revolutionary Government's policies on education for ethnic minority people. However, I will concentrate on four main periods: (1) the resistance war against French colonialism; (2) the time of building socialism in the North and fighting against the Americans in the South; (3) National Unification until the innovation period; and (4) the innovation period to the present.

The Resistance War against French Colonialism: 1945 – 1954

This was the period of time when the Vietnamese government led by President Ho Chi Minh had to carry out the long term resistance war against French Colonialism to gain independence for the country. The Vietnamese government paid particular attention to ethnic policy and issues because they understood that mountainous areas, where many ethnic minority people live, were full of obstacles, had difficult access, and could be a very good base for a resistance war. Thus it was necessary to earn support from the owners of these areas – ethnic minority people.

Right at the beginning of the resistance war against French colonialism, in a conference of central staff, the government discussed how ethnic minority people could resist the French colony's scheme of establishing "self-control areas," and about how to enhance and improve the living standards of ethnic minority people. Besides policies on eradicating illiteracy for children in ethnic minority groups and providing education for ethnic minority youth about culture and politics, the most important policy that the Government carried out

during the resistance war against the French was the training of ethnic minority cadres.[7] Many schools for training ethnic minority cadres were opened during this time.

One year after the Revolutionary Government was founded, it decided to establish the General Department of Ethnic Minorities.[8] One of the tasks of the General Department was examining the political and administrative issues of ethnic minority groups within the country and strengthening ties among ethnic groups in Vietnam. In order to fulfill this task, the first activity of the General Department of Ethnic Minorities was to open Nung Chi Cao school in Hanoi to train ethnic minority staff. Later the graduates of this school went to different provinces to promote resistance work. They taught ethnic minority people to recognize the scheme of their enemy in dividing people within the country. They organized political and social unions in ethnic minority communities and helped make these unions a stable base of support for the Viet Minh.

Building Socialism in the North and Fighting against the Americans in the South: 1954 – 1975

During this period, the country was temporarily divided into two parts: the North and the South, which presented different political tasks for the new Vietnamese government. In this time, the North of Vietnam was liberated. Meanwhile, a resistance war against the Americans was occurring in the South. Because of the war, the policies for the South at that time mostly focused on activities countering the American's war scheme and actions.

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[7] The Vietnamese word *cán bộ* can be translated as either "cadre" or "staff." In the context of the revolution, I find it appropriate to use the word "cadre" because it carries a special revolutionary meaning. Later on I will refer to "staff" as ordinary people who work for the government during non-war times.

[8] The General Department of Ethnic Minorities includes different units: Bureau, Department of Research, Department of Propagandizing, Department of Inspection, Department of Economics, and Department of Receiving Ethnic Minority People. This General Department is a governmental organization which directly carried out ethnic policies, solved ethnic issues in the resistance war (Le, 2005)

Meanwhile, in the North, tasks concentrated on reinforcing the Ethnic Work Office, healing the war "wounds" and improving and building socialism.

The Government's educational policies for ethnic minority areas in the North during this time focused on eradicating illiteracy, opening classes for continuing education, opening elementary and junior secondary schools, requiring general education at the first grade, teaching ethnic minority writing systems, building schools, investing in equipment. Many kinds of schools were opened at this time to provide education for ethnic minorities; for example, vocational schools for ethnic minority youth, schools for children in mountainous areas with preferential policies on scholarships, and teacher training schools with special provisions of textbooks and preferential policies for its teachers and students.

The policy on training ethnic minority cadre, or staff, was still paid much attention by the government. Many different kinds of schools for training ethnic minority cadres were opened, for instance, the Central School of Ethnic Minorities; the School of Southern Cadres; schools for ethnic minority youth; schools of industrial arts; the Central School of University Preparation. The government also issued preferential policies for cadres who were working in mountainous areas at that time.

National Unification until the Innovation Period: 1976 – 1985

During this period the whole country obtained independence. The government's ethnic policies focused on improving and building socialism, solving problems of hunger and poverty, and reinforcing the political system. The government's policy at that time aimed at equality among ethnic groups, national solidarity, and enabling ethnic minority groups to catch up with the majority group. It focused on the following specific tasks: (1) developing different sectors of the national economy in ethnic minority areas (agriculture, forestry and

fishing); (2) improving the living standard of ethnic minority people, building infrastructure in mountainous and ethnic minority areas and improving the material and spiritual life of ethnic minority communities; and (3) enhancing the role of the Government in appropriately solving ethnic issues, propagandizing, and educating ethnic minority people to make them have a sense that their destiny was attached to helping build socialism. One can notice that, during this time, no specific policy on education for ethnic minority people was reported. It may be assumed that there was a continuation of policies on education like those in the previous time period.

Innovation Period: 1986 - Present

Since the adoption of "Đổi Mới" or "innovation" in 1986, the Vietnamese government has focused much attention on education for ethnic minority students. The government has invested a lot of funds in building many boarding schools in ethnic minority areas.[9] Preferential policies also favor ethnic minority areas. For example, ethnic minority students are waived from paying tuition fees, they can borrow textbooks, and they are given free notebooks for their studies.

Among all the policies that give priority to ethnic minority students, the policy on selecting and appointing ethnic minority students to attend vocational schools, colleges, and universities to study is one of the most important policies issued by the government. This policy offers greater access to education for ethnic minority students, and is in place because of a large gap in development between the lowlands and mountainous areas. One of the main reasons for this gap is the lack of qualified staff in ethnic minority areas. The students, who are appointed by the local governments, do not have to take the national university entrance examination. However, they do not often have a choice of the field that they wish to study.

Provision 78 of the Educational Law describes in details who is qualified under the "selecting and appointing student" policy, the rights and the responsibilities that students who attend educational institutions under this policy have to conform to, and the requirements for the local governments who select and appoint students as well as the educational institutions who receive these students (Labour – Society Publishing House, 2002).

From the above overview on the government's policies in different periods of time, it can be seen that education for ethnic minority areas has been one of the priorities of the government, though the purposes for investment in education for ethnic minority people vary over time. It cannot be denied that the government has given many preferences to ethnic minority students; however, the number of ethnic minority students who gain acceptance into higher education programs is still much lower than majority students. Even though the rate of minority university students has increased in the past few years in Vietnam, as Table 2.2 below demonstrates, the overall ratio of minority students to total students has only increased slightly. The total population of the minority groups equals 13.8% of the Vietnam's population, but these students account for less than 1% of the enrollment in university programs. The data shows that, within the same age group, minority students are enrolled in universities approximately 30 times less frequently than their counterparts from the major ethnic group.

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[9] From 1991 to 2000, around 400 boarding schools were built in ethnic minority areas (Le, 2005, p.277)

Table 2.2. Enrolment of Ethnic Minority Students in Vietnamese Universities

School year	Total university students	Ethnic minority university students	Percentage
1999-2000	893,754	2,581	0.29
2000-2001	918,228	3,242	0.35
2001-2002	974,119	4,016	0.41
2002-2003	1,020,667	4,537	0.44
2003-2004	1,032,440	6,182	0.60

Source: Ministry of Education and Training, 2006.

In addition, it is a fact that, although the Vietnamese Government has recently worked out specific policies and special treatments in order to promote literacy and education among ethnic groups, not all educational projects take into consideration the cultural distinctiveness of the minorities. Kampe (1997) points out the effect such policies can have on indigenous cultures in general:

> Formal schooling makes little or no acknowledgment of local conditions, it implicitly promotes urban values, and by ignoring indigenous knowledge and skills also appears to dismiss the likelihood of an important contribution being made by indigenous leaders and others whose job it is to carry and pass on the accumulated traditions of the culture. (p. 157)

As result, the implementation of educational programs designed without solid analysis and the participation of ethnic minorities can lead to the disappearance of the cultures and to the growth of social problems.

Summary

This chapter describes Vietnam as a multi-ethnic country with 54 ethnic groups, including 53 officially designated "ethnic minority groups." Ethnic minority cultures in Vietnam are diverse but also have interactions with each other and with the Kinh majority culture. In recent years, there have been changes in both tangible and intangible cultures in

ethnic minority groups in Vietnam; and there is an increasing demand for cultural staff who wield a very important role in preserving and developing cultural values in ethnic minority areas. The Vietnamese government realized long ago that social life would change alongside changes in economic activities. However, despite the ongoing governmental policies focusing on the improvement of the physical conditions of the life for ethnic minority groups as well on the preservation of cultural traditions, it seems that the ways these policies have been carried out are not always appropriate and productive. This impedes the design of adequate educational reforms and makes their outcome uncertain. Meanwhile, the economic reforms and the eventual dismantling of the traditional life-style of the minority groups will lead to a further fragmentation of the existing social structures in which one part of the inhabitants of the rural areas (especially younger and active individuals) will attempt at merging with urban population, whereas the remaining part of the population will become subjects of impoverishment, alienation and marginalization. Therefore, it is helpful to make an investigation into the experiences of other countries such as Canada and New Zealand in understanding educational issues for ethnic minority people.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section describes the theory that frames my research study. In this study, I use the notion of imagined communities (Anderson, 1991; Kanno, 2003; Norton, 2001 and Pavlenko, 2003), as these are expressed in government policy and by ethnic minority students in higher education in Vietnam. My research aims to explore the contested imagined communities envisioned for ethnic minority students by the government, professors and students, and to find out how these contested imagined communities are expressed in higher education. A review of previous literature on Aboriginal Education in Canada and New Zealand is included in the second section of this chapter to inform the analysis of higher education policy and practices in Vietnam. Even though these two countries have very different historical background from Vietnam, it appears to me that there are a number of common features such as tensions over language, ethnic identity and government policy. Canada and New Zealand also have a much longer and better documented history of education for ethnic minority students. Therefore, these are rich sources of information that can be used to frame a study of Vietnam. Finally, the notion of hegemony and counter-hegemony defined by Gramsci (1971) is applied to analyze and interpret the aboriginal education in Canada and New Zealand.

Theoretical Framework

Anderson (1991) defines a nation is an imagined community because "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (p. 6). This definition shows that a nation is socially constructed and ultimately imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group, and that the notion of imagined communities

applies not only to entire nations, but to virtually all communities. Pavlenko (2003) summarizes the above argument of Anderson in that "imagination is a way to appropriate meanings and create new national identities; as such it has important ideological and identitary functions" (p.253).

When discussing imagined nations and nation-states, Blackledge (2003) affirms that they are always developing, shifting and changing. Therefore, imagined communities are not stable, but are constantly imagined and re-imagined in "diverse and complex ways by dominant and subordinate groups and individuals whose identities are in a constant process of renegotiation" (p.332). According to Pavlenko (2003), the ideological functions of imagination discussed in Anderson (1991) can help us consider the imagining of such above "diverse and complex" contexts. She asserts that the "ideological function allows us to consider imagination not as a personal attribute but as a terrain of struggle between different and often incompatible ideologies of language and identity in particular sociohistoric contexts" (Pavlenko, 2003, p. 253).

Wenger (1998) expands the notion of imagined communities by linking it to the theory of situated learning, which he and Jean Lave developed in 1991. Echoing Anderson's insights, Wenger focuses on the human ability to relate, through imagination, to groups of people "beyond our immediate social networks" (Wenger, as cited in Kanno, 2003, p. 287). For Wenger, "imagination is a distinct form of belonging to a particular community of practice and a way in which individuals locate themselves and others in the world" (Pavlenko 2003, p. 253). Pavlenko found from Wenger's perspective two functions of imagination: educational and identitary.

Building on this idea, Norton (2001) theorizes that an individual's learning is affected not only by the individual's current social participation, but also by their future, imagined affiliations. According to Norton, learners envision imagined communities for themselves and although they have not participated in such communities yet, they still invest in their learning in a way that will enable them access the communities that they imagine. Norton and Kamal (2003) found that English language learners in a Pakistani school saw the development of literacy, competence in English, and technological advances in the future as desirable and interdependent. From the result of this research, they argue that the imagined communities of these Pakistani students not only reflect their participation in a current Pakistan, but also their views towards "a future society in which Pakistan was peaceful, true to the principles of Islam, and a contributing member of the international community" (Norton & Kamal, 2003, p. 301).

Kanno (2003) shows how Norton's conceptualization of imagined communities can be applied to educational institutions. Based on her research on policies and practices of four schools in Japan, whose students are different groups of bilingual children, Kanno (2003) points out that educational institutions envision imagined communities for their students and that their collective visions of these will have "a powerful impact on their current pedagogical policies and practices" (p. 287).

Linking the ideological function coined by Anderson (1991) and the educational function perceived by Wenger (1998), Kanno also mentions the role of educational institutions in reflecting society's visions and transmitting them onto their students. She believes that "educational institutions have the power and expertise to navigate students' learning toward such visions" and that they "can communicate to [their] students an image of

a society in which they have useful and fulfilling roles to play" and that educational institutions "can make that image tangible and accessible" (Kanno, 2003, p. 287).

Blackledge (2003) shares the same idea about this role of educational institutions. She states that "educational discourse is a crucial element of the reproduction of ideologies in contemporary societies" (Blackledge, 2003, p. 333). She demonstrates this idea through her study on the authoritative educational discourse of school inspection reports in Britain which focus on ethnic minority family visits to their heritage countries. She argues that these school inspection reports, which blame minority families for the presupposed harm done to their children's education by visits to the heritage country, actually shows the dominant homogeneous ideology in British society.

In this current study, based on ideological and educational functions that Pavlenko (2003) derives from Anderson's (1991) and Wenger (1998), later expanded by Norton (2001) and Kanno (2003), I try to understand the multiple and contested imagined communities of ethnic minority students in the Department of Ethnic Minority Cultures at the Hanoi University of Culture, Vietnam. To put this issue in broader perspective, I examine the history of aboriginal education in Canada and New Zealand.

Aboriginal Education in Canada and New Zealand

To understand how other countries negotiate education for Aboriginal people, I reviewed literature on Aboriginal education in Canada and New Zealand. I chose Canada because it is the country where I am completing my MA degree, and could gain firsthand experience from indigenous educators in Canada, who have multiple experiences with Aboriginal issues. From courses related to Aboriginal issues that I took at the University of British Columbia, I learned that Maori education in New Zealand is considered a success in

the New Zealand education system. Thus, I have tried to understand why this is the case. The historical backgrounds of Canada and New Zealand are different from the case of Vietnam, however, in terms of Aboriginal issues, these two countries could share certain similarities with Vietnam. For instance, one issue is related to language. While majority ethnic groups speak Vietnamese (in Vietnam) and English (in Canada and New Zealand), ethnic minorities speak their own languages that often cannot compete with the dominant national language. The result of this process is the loss of cultural traditions, mythology, religion, and rituals which are usually transmitted via mother tongues but not via the language of the dominating majority. Like Vietnam, both Canada and New Zealand have specific policies on aboriginal issues and these have developed over time in historical stages. Therefore, through this review of literature on Aboriginal education in these two countries, I hope to explore how Canadian and New Zealand governments envision education for Aboriginal people, and how Aboriginal people in these two countries envision education for themselves. The result obtained from the review of literature allows me a more informed and critical perspectives to frame my own research on ethnic minority education in Vietnam.

Aboriginal Education in Canada

According to Kirkness (1999) the basic changes of the Aboriginal education in Canada can be depicted in four specific stages: Traditional Indian Education; Colonial Domination; Federal Indian Day Schools; and Indian Control of Indian Education. Each stage has its own characteristics and imagined education for Aboriginal people, both envisioned by the government and by Aboriginal people themselves.

Colonization and Assimilation

Education is a powerful vehicle of colonization and assimilation (Atleo, 1991; Cardinal, 1999). Cardinal (1999) asserts that Aboriginal people were envisioned by European settlers and government officials as incapable of making sound decisions for themselves. Therefore, there were numerous attempts to regiment the lives of Aboriginal people in the early development of Canada. With the arrival of Europeans, missionary schools were an attempt to provide formal education for Aboriginal children. Missionary schools were believed to be the best method of civilizing the "natives" (Kirkness, 1999). The missionaries intended to assimilate Aboriginal peoples into the larger society (Cardinal, 1999) where they would soon adopt mainstream (i.e., Euro-dominant) practices (Wilson, 2003).

In an effort to promote the assimilation of Aboriginal people into the dominant society, residential schools were established. These schools were expanded in the 1950's when cooperation between the government and churches was instituted (Van der Woerd & Cox, 2003). This expansion then facilitated the destruction of Aboriginal culture. The government at that time believed that residential schools would be an effective way of removing Aboriginal children from "their unclean, and diseased homes and from their uncivilized parents and cultural traditions" (Tobias, as cited in Van der Woerd & Cox, 2003, p. 209).

Aboriginal children were forcibly taken from their homes to be educated. For many of them, the residential schools were oppressive and full of painful experiences (Cardinal, 1999; Kirkness, 1999). In residential schools, Aboriginal children, who ranged in age from 3 to 18, were provided with skills to prepare them for a domestic, Christian life and menial roles in Western society (Kirkness, 1999; Carr-Stewart, 2003). For example, boys had to clean the

stables, tend to the livestock, mend broken machinery, and work in the field, and girls had to tend to the upkeep of the school, wash and mend clothes, do kitchen chores, and scrub the floor. Children were also taught in a completely alien language and culture. Researchers have described the "English only" policy implemented in residential schools, which banned Aboriginal languages and put Aboriginal people under pressure to assimilate to the dominant culture (Gardner & Jimmie, 1989; Kirkness, 1999). The children in residential schools were taught exclusively in English and were given harsh punishments for speaking their languages and were then not able to communicate with their family members when they returned to their homes (Anderson, 2004).

Educators and researchers argue that the time of residential schools is a period of colonization and assimilation in Aboriginal education. Kirkness (1999) characterizes the period of residential schools as a dark and oppressive period in the history of Aboriginal education. She estimated that 50% of the children in these schools did not benefit from the education. Cardinal (1999) tells us that many of the students in residential schools had painful and cruel experience both physically and psychologically. Many of students died because of illness and especially because of loneliness (Kirkness, 1999). Cardinal (1999) also points out that non-Aboriginal educational methods applied by non-Aboriginals served only non-Aboriginal educators and leaders who carried out the historical education of Aboriginal people. It was painful that such a policy of assimilation and colonization, which denied Aboriginal people equal rights and opportunities to access education, eliminated Aboriginal culture, language and customs, was approved by the federal government (Carr-Stewart, 2003).

Self-expression and Self-determination

There were high failure rates of education and literacy for Aboriginal students who attended residential schools – a schooling system envisioned and designed by non-Aboriginal people to assimilate Aboriginal Youth into dominant society (Hawthorn Report as cited in Cardinal, 1999). This colonial schooling system resulted in the loss of Aboriginal cultural traditions including their native languages (Kirkness, 1999). Gardner (2004) states that for 200 years the colonizers tried to make Aboriginal people forget who they were as well as what their history, language, and culture were like. The Indian control movement in 1972 with the National Indian Brotherhood's declaration of Indian people's right to determine education for their children was an indispensable response of Aboriginal people to the failure of the existing oppressive schooling system and colonial policies. It also reflected the vision of education envisioned by Aboriginal people for themselves.

The self-determination principle in Aboriginal education was envisioned through the Indian Act of 1972. Under this policy, the voice of Aboriginal people for the education of their children was heard and they played a greater role in schooling for their children. There was an increasing number of Aboriginal people who participated in controlling education at schools as board members, teachers, administrators and resource people (Cardinal, 1999).

As mentioned above, the Indian Act of 1972 brought Aboriginal peoples the right to develop an appropriate model of education for their children. With two basic educational principles – "parental responsibility and local control," to Aboriginal people, self-determination is believed to be able to convey "the will of people it represents" (National Indian Brotherhood as cited in Abele, Dittburner, & Graham, 2000, p.7).

The necessity of parental responsibility and local control in Aboriginal education is highlighted by many researchers (Cardinal, 1999; Castellano, Davis & Lahache, 2000; McLeod, 2003; Ignas, 2004; Sterling, 2002), and is envisioned by Aboriginal people as beneficial for Aboriginal education. The principle of parental responsibility and local control in Aboriginal education is understood as the transference of the right to make decisions on education to the local or community level, and this power transfer enables parents and communities to take initiative in controlling and deciding on the education for their children (Castellano, Davis, & Lahache, 2000).

Parental and elder responsibility. Community members such as parents, Elders, and families play an important role in Aboriginal Education (Cardinal, 1999; Friedel, 1999, McLeod, 2003; Ignas, 2004; Sterling, 2002). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, as cited in Castellano, Davis, and Louise Lahache (2000) recommended that:

> All schools serving Aboriginal children adopt policies that welcome the involvement of Aboriginal parents, elders and families in the life of the school, for example, by establishing advisory or parents committees, introducing teaching by elders in the classroom, and involving parents in school activities. (p.257)

Many reasons were indicated for the importance of Aboriginal parents' involvement in their children's school activities. Parents are the first teachers of children so their involvement in school activities is a very significant factor contributing to children's success (BC Ministry of Education, 1999). With parental involvement in school activities, "children achieve higher grades, have better attendance rates, complete more homework, demonstrate more positive attitudes and behaviors, graduate at higher rates, and have greater involvement in higher education" (Henderson & Berla, as cited in Friedel, 1999, p.139). Kirness (1999)

states that involvement in decision-making for the education of their children is a right that Indian parents must enjoy as do other parents across Canada.

To Aboriginal communities, the contribution of Elders to Aboriginal education is very important as well. Cardinal (1999) states that "Elders of Aboriginal nations are keystones to the teaching" (p. 32). Giving further explanation for this keystone role, Ignas (2004) sees Elders as "local knowledge holders, partners in education and co-teachers in the everyday practice of teaching" (p.53). McLeod (2003) shares the same viewpoint. He notes that the Elders are traditional teachers because they store Aboriginal culture and history.

Much effort has been made to let the voices of Aboriginal people be heard to ensure that in the consultation process for education, Aboriginal interests can be raised (Abele, Dittburner & Graham, 2000). However, "it is not enough to hear the Aboriginal voice and to acknowledge the Aboriginal presence; Aboriginal people must be valued as an integral, important part of their own education" (Curwen Doige, 2001. p. 127). Research indicates that the parental responsibility principle in Aboriginal education is enacted through different educational activities (Cardinal, 1999; Friedel, 1999; LaFrance, 2000). It is believed that Aboriginal parents and community members should get involved in curriculum decision-making (Cardinal, 1999; Friedel, 1999; Ignas, 2004). LaFrance (2000) elaborates on this point for effective schooling, suggesting that members like community Elders and parents should participate in designing curriculum, discussing curriculum content and approach, and writing and reviewing curriculum themes.

Parental involvement in a child's school can have many added benefits to a child's education. On the other hand, it is difficult for parents to maintain a level of involvement in school when they want their children's education to be culturally relevant, but they are

themselves a minority group within a school or school system or lack access to sufficient cultural resources. Here local control becomes important. However, it appears that in some schools with heterogeneous advisory committees, there has been much tension between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people over curriculum, teaching methodology, and budgetary expenses (Friedel, 1999). Therefore, it may be easier and beneficial in some circumstances to have local governmental control of certain schools and/or have programs remain entirely in the hands of Aboriginal people.

Local control. According the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), local control can be implemented through a variety of actions: (1) legislation to guarantee Aboriginal representation on school boards where population number warrant; (2) recognition of Aboriginally controlled schools under the jurisdiction of Aboriginal community of interest governments; establishment of Aboriginally governed schools affiliated with school districts, if requested by Aboriginal people; and (4) creation of Aboriginal advisory committees to school boards. (RCAP, as cited in Castellano, Davis & Lahache, 2000). However, control is not turned over completely to the local Aboriginal government, but exists in collaboration with Federal and provincial governments, in terms of funding decisions (Ibid).

Similar to parental responsibility, Aboriginal people believe that local control brings benefits to Aboriginal people. It is believed that Aboriginal education becomes more effective with greater control of communities (Castellano, Davis, & Lahache, 2000). Reality shows that local control has benefited Aboriginal people. For example, as Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) has devolved control of schools to Aboriginal bands, the percentage of fourteen- to seventeen-year-old students in school has increased from 46

percent to 88 percent (INAC data cited in Hampton, 2000). Hampton (2000) asserts that local control brings Aboriginal people the opportunity to offer the best education that they have. Castellano, Davis & Lahache (2000) share this opinion and argue that local control of Aboriginal education has expanded the opportunity for innovation and creativity. It can be seen that, local control of education is not only the right thing morally and socially, but it also works and brings a lot benefit to Aboriginal communities (Hampton, 2000).

Culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy. Indian control of Indian education has made an Aboriginal educational approach respected and recognized. Aboriginal people have the right to decide not only what, but also how to teach their children. One of the typical principles in Aboriginal education which can be inferred from research is the *Culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy principle* (Antone, 2003; Cardinal, 1999; Castellano, Davis, & Lahache, 2000; LaFrance, 2000; Ignas, 2004; Sterling, 2002; McLeod, 2003).

McLeod (2003) states that the most essential need in Aboriginal education is providing Aboriginal students with an appropriate education through which "Aboriginal worldview and pedagogy" are reflected. To him, "Aboriginal curriculum development is a start" (McLeod, 2003, p. 109). Many researchers highlight Aboriginal people stressing cultural factors as of paramount important in educational curriculum. LaFrance (2000) describes curriculum design and presentation as one of the factors involved in the "cultural negotiation" process in education. Aboriginal people's recognition of the importance of culture in curriculum for their children is emphasized in the Recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Regarding Education. In this report, it is suggested that "federal, provincial and territorial governments collaborate with Aboriginal governments, organizations and educators to develop or continue developing innovative curricula that

reflect Aboriginal cultures and communities realities" (RCAP, as cited in Castellano, Davis, & Lahache, 2000, p.257).

Some main cultural factors in curriculum for Aboriginal people are those which refer to aspects such as relationships appreciation (Antone, 2003; Hill as cited in Antone 2003; MacIvor, 1995 & McLeod, 2003), and distinct ways of thought, learning, teaching and communicating (McLeod, 2004). Hill refers to the relationship factor as the social interaction of Aboriginal communities (Hill, as cited in Antone, 2003). McLeod mentions another aspect of relationship which is the "interconnectedness of the land" (McLeod, 2003). Giving standards for Aboriginal education, MacIvor (1995) considers spirituality as one of the standards for Aboriginal education. She believes in the existence of spiritual relationships between *all* things. Generalizing all of the above mentioned aspects of relationship, Antone (2003) summarizes relationships as those "between self, community, nation and creation" (p.9).

Aboriginal people believe that their cultures have distinct ways of teaching (Hampton, as cited in Cardinal, 1999). It is their wish that their children could be educated:

> ...in settings in which our children can develop the fundamental attitudes and values which have an honoured place in Indian tradition and culture. We want the behaviour of our children to be shaped by those values which are most esteemed in our culture. It is important that children have a chance to develop a value system which is compatible with Indian culture. (The National Indian Brotherhood, 1972, as cited in Castellano, Davis, & Lahache, 2000, p.8)

Aboriginal communities are concerned with the importance of making their children aware of their own culture through education (Cardinal, 1999; McLeod, 2003 & Ignas, 2004). Only when Aboriginal students learn the factors which shape them – such as their history, their traditions, customs, languages and culture – will they understand themselves,

who they are, and where they belong to (The National Indian Brotherhood as cited in Sterling 2002, p.5). Therefore, Aboriginal people envision teachers with a particular and appropriate pedagogy that embraces cultural approaches important to Aboriginal education. The reason for culturally preferred pedagogy in teaching Aboriginal students is pointed out by some researchers. Banks and Banks (1997) argue that by understanding Aboriginal culture, teachers will find it easier to understand their students and therefore it will be easier for them to teach students in a new and different cultural setting. Beside, Deyhle and Swisher (as cited in Banks and Banks, 1997), claim that from their own experience as educators in higher-level institutions, they recognize that if a teacher brings the language and culture of Aboriginal students into the classroom they will help students improve their learning. Later, Ignas (2004) reiterates this point and asserts that it is essential for teachers to understand Indigenous culture and that through the teaching process, teachers need to "build upon the unique background knowledge of Indigenous students in order to best help them to meet the learning outcomes for their particular grade and subject area" (p.52).

This distinct culturally preferred pedagogy has been demonstrated in educational projects conducted with Aboriginal students; for example, the Akwesasne Science and Mathematics Pilot Project described by LaFrance (2000). Although this is a project which relates to the Science and Mathematics field, the Project Board decided to approach schooling from a cultural perspective. Their overall goal was not to provide students with scientific knowledge, but, more importantly, to promote Aboriginal students' self-confidence and self-esteem through introducing and reinforcing the importance and contribution of science and math in First Nations cultures.

Cardinal (1999) asserts that what students learn in their schools is the most powerful tool in education and that pedagogy chosen by instructors to transmit learning has significant effect on how well students learn. Culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy principles in Aboriginal education chosen by Aboriginal people in Canada helps their students learn not only the substance of their language and how to simply communicate with it, but also why it is important and how it may help them stay connected to their community and culture.

Native language preservation. Besides the principle of culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy, Aboriginal people envision language preservation as an approach to reflect their self-determination in keeping their own identity. Aboriginal people argue that in their languages they can "define self-government and self-determination and cannot be swayed by having to explain these terms in English" (Young, 2003, p. 105). There is a consensus that to Aboriginal people their native languages are very important in education (Battiste, 1998; Gardner & Jimmie, 1989; Kirkness, 1989, 1998, 2002; McLeod, 2003; Sachdev, 1998). Researchers have mentioned various important aspects of Aboriginal languages to Aboriginal people in general and to Aboriginal education in particular. These aspects are summarized below.

Battiste (1998) and McLeod (2003) share the idea that language is important because, as they put it, "it is knowledge." Battiste notes that to Aboriginal people, languages are the "tool for unlocking knowledge." The knowledge discussed in Battiste's research is the "tribal knowledge" which is "the repository of vital instructions, lessons, and guidance" that belongs uniquely to Aboriginal people. McLeod also states that Aboriginal languages hold precious keys that can help them in their journey of discovering knowledge they inherited from their ancestors. In addition, McLeod emphasizes that Aboriginal people consider their languages

as special instruments that allow them to build "a knowledge base" and to better understand their history and culture.

The close connection of language to culture has been discussed in numerous works (Garder & Jimmie, 1989; Kirkness, 1989; Sachdev, 1998). Languages are seen as the means through which culture is transmitted from generation to generation (Kirkness, 1989; Sachdev, 1998). Further, languages have the even more important role of differentiating cultures. In other words, a language is responsible for the uniqueness in the ways a group of people perceive the world, as well as how they build relationships among themselves and other cultures. Kirkness (1998) concluded that Aboriginal people find it is vital to preserve their native languages in order to give their Aboriginal culture a chance to be perpetuated.

Battiste (1998) and Kirkness (1989) both believe that Aboriginal languages are a special gift that the Creator gave to Aboriginal people and thus have a sacred value for them as well. In particular, Kirkness (1989, 1998, 2002) wrote several articles concerning the importance of Aboriginal languages emphasizing the special function that languages offer Aboriginal people in constructing their identity. To her, the uniqueness of a group's world view is expressed through language; moreover, language also determines the identity of the individual members of the community. Similarly, McLeod (2003) argues that Aboriginal languages not only empower the speakers while determining their identities, but can also empower the listeners. As a result, "a sense of pride and a deeper sense of identity are built for both Aboriginal speakers and listeners" (McLeod, 2003, p. 114).

Native language preservation is envisioned by Aboriginal people as very important in maintaining their knowledge, culture and identity. To Canadian Aboriginal people, preserving their own knowledge, culture and identity means they can participate more

equally and fully in the economic, social, political and cultural life of Canada (Kirkness, 1989). Therefore, preserving and advancing Aboriginal languages in schools for their children is one way that Aboriginal people show their self-determination in choosing what is beneficial and important for their children to learn.

The imagined communities of education for Aboriginal people in Canada have changed depending on the socio-historical contexts of different period of times. There have been two competing goals for Aboriginal education: assimilation and self-determination. However, it can be seen that Aboriginal people keep their tremendous strength to maintain their identity and to realize their place in Canada through education to ensure "the future of [their] people as a unique people" (Kirness, 1999, p. 21).

The history of Aboriginal education in Canada teaches us about the durable effort of Aboriginal people to struggle for their right of self-determination in deciding the education for themselves; that which they vision as the most suitable and relevant to their values and cultures. There should be much information that is relevant or parallels the situation in Vietnam. In this way, the experience of Aboriginal people in can help us to understand the same issues in Vietnam in comparative perspective.

Aboriginal Education in New Zealand

Like Canada, New Zealand is also a country where the indigenous populations have suffered severe social, economic, cultural and political outcomes as a result of colonization (Smith, 2005). The Maori are the original inhabitants in New Zealand who account approximately for six hundred thousand, that is, 15 % of the total population of New Zealand. Concerning education, Maori people have experienced different situations within the dominant Pakeha society. The education has been envisioned differently by the

government and the Maori themselves in different periods of time. Here I will review literature on the visions of Education for Maori people in New Zealand under mission and native schooling systems, and Maori education from the 1980's to the present.

Education for Maori People under the Mission and Native Schooling Systems

Simon (1998) asserts that an important feature of colonial policy in New Zealand was through schooling for Maori people. He describes the mission schools and the native schools as European style schooling systems for the Maori in New Zealand as "important sites in which struggles between Pakeha and Maori cultural interests occurred at several levels" (Simon, 1998, p.131). The most important observation is that under mission and native schooling systems, education for Maori people was envisioned by the government as an agenda towards assimilation and colonization. Meanwhile, it was envisioned by Maori people as a struggling against losing their own sovereignty and culture, and towards better life-chances in a Pakeha dominant society (Bishop, 2003; Shuker, 1987; Simon, 1998, 2000; Simon and Smith, 2001; Smith, 2002).

Assimilation and colonization. The first mission school in New Zealand was opened in 1816. The schools were mostly run by British missionaries. Schooling was considered a means of assimilating or 'civilizing' Maori people by both the missionaries and government. Simon (2000) shows that under this schooling system, they wanted to assimilate Maori into European culture as well as to support and facilitate European access to Maori land.

'Civilising' the Maori was described as persuading them to give up their customs, habits, values, and language and follow the style of European people. At the beginning, Maori was the language of instruction in mission schools. However, the method of instruction was English-oriented (Jenkins, 1991 as cited in Sutherland, 1994) and the reading

materials mainly consisted of the Scriptures (Simon, 2000). Harawira (1995) states that the missionaries envisioned the work of civilizing Maori people as Christianizing them. Reconstruction of the Maori's extended family into Christian-style nuclear family units was central to the missionary agenda. Harawira (1995) describes the practice of encouraging Maori women and girls to reside in missionary homes at that time. The aim of this practice was to give Maori women and girls a chance to learn Christian ways, manners, and dress and in particular to learn how to recreate the model of 'happy Christian families.' Although the missionaries did not attempt to completely assimilate Maori people, and used Maori as a language of instruction during this early missionary period, McConnell asserted that teaching Maori people with an English-oriented method of instruction "irrevocably altered traditional Maori education and the transmission of knowledge" (McConnell, as cited in Sutherland, 1994). Looking at another aspect, Simon and Smith (2001) argue that on the one hand, teaching through Maori underlined its perceived cultural value in some measure, but on the other hand, it could be understood that controlling the language of instruction, the language of Maori print literacy and the production of printed Maori language texts, was the way that missionaries could control the knowledge and information Maori could potentially access.

After New Zealand became a Crown Colony, Maori language was replaced by English at mission schools (Simon & Smith, 2001). The Education Ordinance of 1847 stated the Government's decision on subsidizing mission schools with certain conditions. Sir George Grey - the Governor of New Zealand at that time summarized these conditions:

> All schools which shall receive any portion of the Government grant, shall
> be conducted as heretofore upon the principle of religious education;
> industrial training, and instruction in the English language, forming a
> necessary part of system in such schools (Simon & Smith, 2001, p.160).

In is evident that the English only policy in mission schools subsidized by the government was used to enhance the assimilation process. Maori parents reported their dissatisfaction with the industrial training schools: "we thought you took our children from us to give them schooling but instead you are making slaves of them" (AJHR, 1867 as cited in Simon, 2000 p. 47). According to them, the government intended the schools to prepare Maori for laboring class status.

At the same time, the government wanted to establish British law in the country. The statesmen's vision was that assimilating Maori people meant making them become law-abiding. British law served colonists' interests, and through it European acquisition of Maori land was facilitated (Simon, 2000). Shuker (1987) and Simon (2000) both discuss the statesmen's aim of replacing the Maori communal system by individualized titles to land. Simon points out that the aim of the assimilation agenda was to support and facilitate European access to Maori land. It was in the report of Henry Taylor, in 1862 in which he emphasized that the 'most serious impediment to progress' in 'carrying out the work of civilization' within the schools was the Maori custom of communal ownership of property (Simon, 2000, p.45).

Simon (2000) reports that by the mid 1860's, Maori people abandoned mission schools because they were disillusioned with them. In order to find another medium to assimilate Maori people, under the Native School Act of 1867, the government set up the native school system. The assimilation in native schools could be seen in different aspects. However, the two most visible aspects were through the language of instruction (Shuker, 1987; Simon, 1998, 2000; and Simon & Smith, 2001) and the content of curriculum (Simon, 1998, 2000).

Shuker (1987) affirms that the emphasis of native schools was teaching English. The assimilating aim of using English as language of instruction was visible in the visions of James Pope, inspector for native schools from 1880 to 1903. He envisioned part of his task as bringing Maori people in line with European civilization by instructing Maori people in the use of English. Later, Simon (2000) tells us that under the *Native Schools Code* all teaching in native schools was to be conducted in English and teachers in native schools were supposed to teach Maori students how to read, write and speak English. In fact, the Maori language was allowed to be spoken in junior classes under Pope's regime. However, after that, the direct method of teaching English, which was understood as studying a second language faster and more effectively if the first language was not used at all, was introduced in native schools. As a result, the Maori language was not allowed in class anymore.

In terms of curriculum, in the first 60 years since the establishment of native schools, cultural practices of Maori were not allowed in the content of curriculum because the government wanted to assimilate Maori people to British culture (Simon, 1998). The curriculum in native schools consisted of the same core subjects which were taught in European schools (Shuker, 1987). Shuker states that the content of the curriculum at that time was not aimed at enhancing Maori students intellectually, but was designed to train them mainly for lower-class occupations: the Maori boy to become a good farmer and the girl to become a good farmer's wife. Later, Simon (2000) confirms this aspect again. He emphasizes that education for Maori at that time was limited to manual and domestic training and that Maori people were under pressure to adopt European values and customs. However, in the 1930's, assimilation was replaced by a policy of 'cultural adaptation.' Simon (1998) considers the application of this policy as contributing to Maori culture because under this

policy, a lot of Maori cultural practices were incorporated into the curriculum. And according to him, it seemed that the Maori community was successful in bringing a change in policy to native schools. However, Shuker (1987) did not see much of a positive change in this education policy for Maori people. He asserts that although Maori cultural practices were reintroduced in the curriculum, the first and foremost task of this schooling system was still assimilation and its main teaching practice was teaching English.

Maintaining sovereignty and life-chances. Simon (2000) shows that under the mission and native school systems, Maori expectations in regard to schooling were very different from those of the government. It can be said that at that time, Maori envisioned education for themselves as towards maintaining sovereignty and life-chances.

To begin with, researchers point out that Maori parents were anxious for the provision of English as a language instruction in schools for their children, however, their goals were very different from those of the government (Shuker, 1987; Simon, 1998, 2000; Simon & Smith, 2001). Simon (2000) clearly points out that one of the main goals of the Maori people in studying English was to keep their land. The European demands for land kept increasing and this demand was facilitated with the support of the government with the application of the *Native Land Act*. In this situation, Maori people recognized that in order to deal with both settlers and government administrators, it was necessary for them to learn English. They needed to be ready to prevent the theft of their land. Their goal of maintaining sovereignty was more visible with their attempts to establish *kotahitanga* – inter tribal unity – in order to prepare for the fight against the increasing European demands for land. Simon (2000) finds these attempts a reasonable explanation for Maori parents' expectation for their children to study English.

Although Simon and Smith (2001) report that in many cases Maori endowed the schools with land and money, they affirm that it did not mean Maori parents did not want to keep their culture. Instead, Maori parents' purpose was to enable their children to master the English language because if they did not, they would remain in an inferior position to Europeans just by their ignorance of the English language.

With the assimilation policy, the government wanted the Maori to give up their traditional knowledge and culture and adopt European culture. However, research suggests that the Maori people just wanted to add 'Pakeha wisdom' to their indigenous knowledge (Shuker, 1987; Sutherland, 1994) in order to seek better opportunities in a Pakeha-dominant society (Simon, 2000; Simon & Smith, 2001).

Simon mentions that being impressed by European technology was one of the reasons for Maori people's enthusiasm to add Pakeha wisdom to their existing knowledge (Simon, as cited in Sutherland, 1994). However, Shuker (1987) and Simon (2000) point out the main aim of Maori people's effort to understand and study European knowledge was to seek better life-chances in society. Maori parents expected their children would become bilingual and also would acquire European knowledge in order not to "hold poor positions in the future of colony" (Barrington, as cited in Simon, 2000, p. 50) and to "avoid being disadvantaged in relation to Europeans" (Simon & Smith, 2001, p. 160). Shuker points out a similar aspect to Maori people's aim in acquiring European knowledge. He shows that Maori people saw schooling as a means through which they could participate more fully in a European-style economy (Shuker, 1987).

Maori Education from the 1980s to the Present

Smith (2002) reports that during the 1980s the New Zealand government instituted economic reforms that moved the country more towards a capitalist or free market economy and further away from a welfare state economy. These reforms, whether economically beneficial or not to the nation as a whole, tended to support or encourage rather individualistic, Western values such as "freedom of the individual," "the autonomous chooser," "consumer choice," etc. The reforms had the side-effect of suppressing more collectivistic Maori values and may even be viewed as a form of neo-colonialism (Smith 1997, as cited in Smith, 2002). Therefore, we can see a conflict between what the government envisioned for its workforce and traditional Maori values. One may be reasonably assume that many educational institutions adapted to meet the demands of this new type of economy, suppressing Maori culture again.

Towards transformation and self-determination. It is clear that during 1980's the Maori had a very different view of their place within New Zealand's society and economy. Rather than fully assimilate to European, capitalist values, a Maori "revolution" occurred around the same time as these reforms. Maori, through legal means, took the initiative towards self-determination and education for themselves.

Smith (2000) depicts the Maori educational revolution in New Zealand during the 1980's with a range of alternative schooling innovations in different educational sites like pre-schools, primary schools, secondary schools, and at the tertiary level. According to Smith (2002), Maori people took more control in administration of Maori education such as selecting curriculum and controlling funding and resources, engaging more political action, developing strategies to revitalize Maori language (including establishing schools in which

Maori is the language of instruction) and incorporating more Maori culture and preferred methodology in their schools, and maintaining collectivistic social structures.

The influence of this movement for self-determination was appreciated by Menzies, Archibald, and Smith (2004). They state that the revolution and transformative action of Maori education has created at least three principal lessons for other Indigenous contexts including First Nations in Canada. They are "the need to be positive and proactive in developing transformation for themselves," "the need to develop transformation through multiple strategies in multiple sites," and "the need to actively heal the divide between Indigenous communities and the Academy" (Menzies, Archibald, & Smith, 2004, pp.1-2).

Looking at another more specific level of self-determination, Bishop (2003) discusses the involvement not only of Maori parents in the decision-making process but also the necessity of the involvement of students themselves. Students' involvement included participating in the decision-making process related to curriculum planning and content and the direction of learning. Bishops argues that it is dangerous to deny students' self-determination and to stereotype Maori students, and it is necessary that Maori students determine "their own diverse positionalities in classrooms" (Bishop, 2003, p. 226).

Through the actions the Maori took, we can see implicitly that their intention is to fully retain their culture and values. One might go as far as to argue that the Maori wished to "decolonize" themselves and perhaps move farther away from European cultural values than they are at the present time (Smith, 2002).

Towards acknowledgement and cooperation. The revolution of Maori education in 1980's actually has not only positively influenced Maori people in the sense that Maori people can have an education which reflects their cultural, political, economic, and social

preferences. It has also affected the perception of the government on the control of Maori education by Maori people as well as on its contribution to the development of New Zealand as a whole.

A publication of the New Zealand's government's *Tertiary Education Strategy* states that they envision the Maori as being part of Maori culture while also contributing to the needs of the country and the world. Specifically, in the *Tertiary Education Framework*, the Maori are envisioned to "live as Maori," "enjoy good health & high standard of living," and "actively participate as citizens of the world" (Ministry of Education New Zealand, 2002, pp. 29-30).

The objectives stated in this publication also support the idea of the Maori as significant contributors to managing Maori education, revitalizing the Maori language, supporting Maori visions and aspirations, increased numbers of Maori earning higher quality and higher level education, and contributing to large scale Maori development (Ministry of Education New Zealand, 2002). These objectives appear to give Maori the right to determine their own visions and imagined communities. But, the government might not want the Maori to obtain complete autonomy. For example, the details of these objectives reveals that the government expects the Maori to contribute to New Zealand as a whole and to cooperate with other government institutions:

> Specifically, there will be greater numbers of Maori achieving in fields critical to the development of Maori, and *the wider New Zealand community*, such as natural and applied sciences, information technology, and research based in Maori intellectual tradition. (Ministry of Education New Zealand, 2002, p. 33, emphasis added)

> Maori communities will be working to a greater degree with local and regional tertiary education providers and industry to ensure the success of regional economic development plans. Collaborative arrangements between Maori communities, industries, local and regional government

will be reflected in the range of regional tertiary provision. Tertiary education organizations will have entered into collaborative arrangements to ensure regional expectations are being met and will be working closely with hapu and iwi to achieve the goals of their education strategies and plans. (Ministry of Education New Zealand, 2002, p. 33)

Within this government publication is an example of how a vision of Maori education is contested even within the own government's policies. Therefore, even in the recent past, there is a conflict between imagined communities of New Zealand's indigenous people and their colonizers. One thing that is unique about the Maori situation is the impressive way in which they took the initiative to defend their culture. In fact, it is part of their vision that they will determine their own future and will be autonomous with respect to the rest of New Zealand's society.

Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony

Hegemony

Gramsci's (1971) definition of *hegemony*, includes "intellectual, moral, and political" factors in which a dominant culture can maintain its influence and control over minority groups (p.58). This hegemony can be maintained by "civil society" and institutions that are prevalent throughout society, such as schools and other social institutions, in which the dominant group has indirect control over minority groups (p.12). Values and beliefs held by the dominant culture can be imposed on minority groups as a way of maintaining power over such groups. Submission to such hegemony may be through "spontaneous consent" which is caused by "the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production" (p.12). Alternately, "The State" can exert direct and coercive control of its people (p.12), especially of those who do not agree with it.

The State's policy towards colonization and assimilation in Aboriginal education in both Canada and New Zealand was actually an expression of the dominant governing society's hegemony of knowledge, culture and languages towards Aboriginal people. Power in the two countries' respective educational systems was held mostly by people from dominant groups, and important decisions on educational issues in the state schooling system have been decided mostly by this group of people (Cardinal, 1999; Smith, 1990). The governments of both countries believed that taking Aboriginal children from their "uncivilized" cultures and traditions and putting them into European style schools would both make them adopt "civilized" knowledge, culture and lifestyles, and help them increase their living standards and become "civilized" citizens. Aboriginal students not only had to study a hegemonic curricula, but also were subject to culturally irrelevant teaching and styles. Many students were subject to physical and symbolic violence as well. The policy that allowed only the use of English in residential schools in both countries only added to the promotion of the dominant European group's status, culture and ideology in these two countries, and to the improvement of the needs, interests and identities of Europeans.

The idea that Aboriginals needed to be "civilized" gave Aboriginal students the impression that anything they were doing was inferior to what non-Aboriginal students were doing. Moreover, Aboriginals had difficulty adjusting to an alien language, culture and value system. As a result, they not only lost their indigenous knowledge, cultures, and languages, but their academic performance was also often very low. Therefore, the knowledge and culture that Aboriginal children adopted, in fact, served the interests of dominant people but not Aboriginal people. Such policies by the dominant group sought to maintain their

powerful position within society through hegemony without having to resort to direct coercion.

Counter-hegemony

According to Gramsci, countering hegemony may follow two paths: One involves direct confrontation and fighting, or a *war of manouvre,* in which the ruling class is small and concentrated and can be overthrown in a short time, and a *war of position,* in which it is more appropriate to wage a slow struggle against civil institutions and values of the dominant group that are widespread and prevalent throughout society.

Throughout history, Aboriginal people have built up counter-hegemony against dominant groups to work for change of their subordinate status in the society. These efforts have sought to resist complete control by the dominant groups, imposed values, beliefs and morality, and have sought to shift power towards Aboriginal people with regard to their own affairs and education. The involvement of parents and Elders in Aboriginal education has increased their control of knowledge used in the schooling of their children. Their involvement in controlling curriculum, and deciding on key educational issues in schooling systems not only confirmed their right to decide on education for their children; but more importantly, it contributed to the academic success of their children. Parents and Elders are aware of many past indigenous traditions and cultural values, but their children are not. Their current contribution to the design and selection of curriculum for their children is an effective way to pass their indigenous cultural values and tradition on to the next generation, and is an example of a counter-hegemonic practice challenging dominant European ideologies of schooling.

Culturally relevant curricula and teaching methodology also helps Aboriginal students in these two countries learn what is relevant to their cultures and values, and insures that they are not colonized by dominant knowledge and irrelevant teaching methodologies. They acquire knowledge, new technology and ideas in their own ways based on their own values and cultures. Culturally relevant curricula meet the corresponding needs of Aboriginal students and culturally relevant teaching methodology help to facilitate and unearth the strengths of the students.

Efforts to preserve and legitimate native aboriginal languages through educational activities have also been beneficial. Aboriginal people in both these two countries consider preserving and legitimating their native language as a means to maintain their knowledge, culture and identity. These actions are likewise a counter-hegemonic process. Aboriginal people of these two countries have made great effort in preserving and advancing their native languages. In Canada, there has been a call for larger availability of First Language teaching materials (Battiste, 1998; Kirkness, 2002; McEachern, 1988); and for more qualified linguistic specialists, curriculum developers, researchers and teachers, especially Aboriginal instructors (Kirkness, 1998; 2000). Quite successfully, Maori people in New Zealand have established schools in which Maori is the language of instruction.

Summary

Although both Canada and New Zealand have experienced failure in Aboriginal education, aboriginal people in these two countries are currently struggling to defend their culture and identity. In essence, governments from both of these countries have tried to exert a hegemonic influence over Aboriginal people by trying to control their education and assimilate them to the dominant culture. Indigenous groups in both countries have identified

specific ways in which to improve culturally relevant education for their children. The Maori in New Zealand also stand out as an example of an Aboriginal group taking the initiative in their education. They took a much more active role in trying to defend their culture against the colonizers, even in the colonization and assimilation period. Aboriginals in both countries have their own visions of education for their children through which their children can maintain their self-identity to advance harmoniously and steadily in the modern world (Agbo, 2001). Clearly then, there is a sense of counter-hegemony present among Aboriginal groups in Canada and New Zealand.

While the history of aboriginal education in Canada and New Zealand is unique to each country, I believe there are several key issues which should be considered in researching ethnic minority education in Vietnam. These include how issues of language, control of education, culturally relevant curriculum, and ethnic identity are expressed in government policy, educational programs for ethnic minority students, and pedagogy, as these are contested across policy, institutions, faculty and student in the Hanoi University of Culture, the site of my field research, detailed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODS

This chapter gives an overview of the methods used in this study. It provides a detailed description of the research design, including information on the research setting, the selection of research participants, and the process of data collection and analysis. The study's limitations and the assumptions are also included.

Research Setting

My research was conducted in the Department of Ethnic Minority Cultures at the Hanoi University of Culture, Vietnam. I chose to conduct field research at this university because it is the only university in Vietnam that has a BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures.

Hanoi University of Culture was founded on March 26, 1959 by the Ministry of Culture of Vietnam under the name "School of Cultural Staff." Its main objective at that time was to foster the knowledge and professional skills of future state functionaries working in fields related to culture. In 1977, it was upgraded and became "College of Culture." In 1982, the College was upgraded and became the Hanoi University of Culture. Its function was to train future librarians, specialists in conservation of cultural heritage, publishers, tour guides, and organizers of cultural activities. The Hanoi University of Culture is the only university of the Ministry of Culture and Information specializing in training future staff working in various fields related to culture; in particular, the culture of ethnic minorities. Over the last 44 years, approximately 10,000 students have graduated from the University. University graduates currently work all over the country, mainly as civil servants dealing with various cultural activities.

The Department of Ethnic Minority Cultures was formed in 1989. Students in the BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures are comprised of three different groups: ethnic minority students who are appointed by the local government to study at the University (these students do not have to take the national university entrance exam); staff from different organizations which require professional staff development or training (these learners do not have to take the national university entrance exam, but they do have to take an exam given by the Hanoi University of Culture); and Kinh and ethnic minority students from different provinces who take the national university entrance exam.

The current program is aimed at educating staff who will work in cultural fields in ethnic minority areas. Students who graduate from the program are expected to be able to: (1) study, collect and preserve the cultural values of ethnic minority areas; (2) organize and hold cultural activities in ethnic minority areas; and (3) evaluate cultural activities in ethnic minority areas.

Approach

In this institutional case study, I applied ethnographic field research techniques to explore the imagined communities of students, faculty and government policy at play in the Department of Ethnic Minority Cultures at the Hanoi University of Culture in Vietnam. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) assert that "the purpose of educational ethnography is to provide rich, descriptive data about the contexts, activities, and beliefs of participants in educational settings," (p.17) and that "the outcomes of educational ethnography contribute to improvement in educational and school practice in several ways. They strengthen the overall research upon which innovations and policies are based" (p. 32). In this study, I undertook extended fieldwork in my research setting, conducted document analysis of policy and

curriculum materials, served as a participant-observer in classes, and undertook interviews with faculty and students.

Fieldwork

My fieldwork took place over a three-month period (February to April 2006) at the Hanoi University of Culture in Vietnam. Van Maanen (1988) defines fieldwork as "living with and living like those who are studied;" this demands "full-time involvement of a researcher over a lengthy period of time" and it "consists mostly of ongoing interaction with the human target of study on their home ground" (p.2). Building on my previous relationship with colleagues at the Hanoi University of Culture, I asked for permission to work as a "liaison teacher" in one of the classes in the Department of Ethnic Minority Cultures. The class in question was Ethnic Minority Cultures 10B. A liaison teacher is considered the link between the students and the Department. If students have petitions or questions concerning their study or their social activities in the university, they can discuss these first with their liaison teacher. By working as a liaison teacher, I had better and more constant interactions with the faculty members as well as the students in the Department. This helped me become highly involved in the actual experiences of participants.

Role of the Researcher

I consider myself both insider and outsider in this research. This binary position has both advantages and disadvantages. First, I see myself as an insider because to begin with, I conducted the research on higher education issue in my home country – where I had experience in higher education in both positions of a student and an instructor. With this experience, I have a basic understanding of how the higher education system in Vietnam works. In addition, I also consider myself an insider because before coming to Canada, I

worked as an English language instructor at the Hanoi University of Culture – a familiar setting. This insider position helped me to easily gain rapport, access, and relationships, and to be accepted to conduct research in the Department of Ethnic Minority Cultures. When I conducted my research in the university, the faculty member participants always considered me as their colleague. They saw this research as the work of people who work in the same educational area, and as the chance for us to exchange professional experience and to understand each other more. Some other colleagues, whom I had a closer relationship, were explicit their kind intention of seeing this as the chance to help me to successfully complete my MA research. When I explained to them my research aims, they immediately showed their enthusiasm and support by trying to providing me with as much information as they could, suggesting how to approach some potential participants, and how to gain access to all sorts of information available related to the program. Also, as an insider conducting interviews in my native language, I understood the nuances of language.

However, the insider position as a faculty member in the university also seemed to bring me disadvantages. Having rapport with the Department, on the one hand, was a wonderful chance for me to have an inclusive observation and interaction with professors and students in the Department; on the other hand, I felt that there might have been tension with students when they were aware of my relations to the Department and to their professors. This might have made a few of them sometimes not completely open and honest to me about their opinions of the program's content and the teaching methodology in the Department. At this point, I could not conclude if there was actually such tension with students when they were aware that I am a faculty member in the university or not. However, I noticed one thing from the interviews when I conducted with students: some of them were sometimes

contradictory themselves when I asked their opinions about program and about the teaching methods. For example, one of the students, at the beginning, said that she completely agrees with the teaching methods in the Department but in the second interview session, when we were a bit closer to each other, she did have complaints about the teaching methods in the Department. Perhaps I was able to gain the trust of these students after a while.

I also positioned myself as an outsider in the research because my research related to ethnic minority issues whereas I am not an ethnic minority person. Moreover, my educational background was not in the ethnic minority culture field. I was trained to become a teacher of English. The outsider status helped me elicit more detailed explanations concerning ethnic minority cultures, traditions, customs and ways of thinking from my participants, especially from the participants who are ethnic minorities. However, the outsider status sometimes negatively affected my feelings. For example, some participants see some scholars who are either not in the field of ethnic minority cultures or not being an ethnic minority as uninformed or unqualified outsider researchers. Such an attitude made me doubt if some researchers would embrace my research in the ethnic minority culture field.

Research Participants

Participants in this research were expected to be informants who would "have the knowledge and experience the researcher requires... the ability to reflect, [be] articulate [and have] the time to be interviewed" (Morse, as cited in Palys, 2003, p. 143). The first group of study participants was comprised of faculty members, including four full-time faculty members, and one sessional faculty member. These participants were able to provide rich information concerning the design of current curriculum and the teaching and learning activities in the Department. The second group of participants was comprised of ten students

in the Department who were appointed by local governments to study at the University. Although the BA program lasts for four years, my study included only students who were in their third and fourth academic year. This is because after two years studying in the Department, the third and the fourth year students will have obtained certain ideas and experiences of the curriculum and program as well the teaching and learning activities in the Department. They were therefore likely to be "information rich" for the purpose of my study.

Selection

The participants in my research were chosen as a purposeful sample. Morse discusses four useful techniques for purposeful sampling: extreme case sampling, intensity sampling, maximum variety/diversity sampling, and deviant case (Morse, as cited in Palys, 2003). Among these techniques I used "maximum variety sampling," which focuses on sampling for diversity. According to Palys (2003), this technique helps the researcher "unearth either the variety of human experience and perception with respect to some phenomenon or some of the commonalities of that experience across diverse peoples" (p. 144). With this technique I was able to understand a variety of interpretations of the "imagined community" of ethnic minority students from diverse faculty members as well as students. The "diversity" factor in my research concerns diversity in ethnicity. The first group of participants – faculty members--comprised both faculty who were ethnic minorities and those who were part of the ethnic majority group. I included both of types of participants in my research because it was my assumption that these two groups might have dissimilar epistemologies about the curriculum as well as different ideas about teaching and learning for ethnic minority students in the program.

Ten students were chosen as follows: first, I grouped students based on their language group. The rationale behind this lies in Trinh, Nguyen, Le, and Nguyen's (2004) discussion of two common angles through which ethnic minority cultures in Vietnam can be approached. According to the authors, one can either approach cultures which share the same language family, or approach cultures which share the same geographical condition (p.20). In this study, I chose students based on their language group because these authors' suggestion that ethnic minority groups which share the same language family also often share similar traditions and culture. Next, based on the proportion of students (third and fourth year) represented in the Department, I determined the number of students from each language group. The number of students selected from each language group mirrors the proportion of students from each language group in the Department. Table 4.1 shows the proportion of ethnic minority students in the third and fourth year in the Department divided by language groups.

Table 4.1. 3rd and 4th Year Ethnic Minority Students in the Department by Language Group

	Language Group	Ethnic Group	Number of Students	Ratio
1.	Tay-Thai	Tay, Thai, Nung, Giay, Lao	45 + 16 + 10 + 1 + 2 = 74	47.9%
2.	Viet-Muong	Kinh, Muong, Tho, Chut	32 + 12 + 2 + 1 = 47	35.2%
3.	Hmong-Dao	Hmong, Pa Then	5 + 1 = 6	4.4%
4.	Mon-Khmer	Mnong, Gie-trieng, Xinh Mun, Khang	1 + 1 + 1 + 1 = 4	2.8%
5.	Kadai or Co Lao	La Chi, Pu Peo	1 + 1 = 2	1.4%
6.	Han	Hoa, San Diu	1 + 1 = 2	1.4%
7.	Tibeto-Burman	Phu La	1	0.7%
			136 (46: Male; 90: Female)	

The proportions of minority students in the third and fourth year in the Department divided by language groups are as follows: (1) students from the Tay-Thai language group account for 47.9% of the population of students in the Department; (2) students from the Viet-Muong language group account for 35.2% (among them Vietnamese (Kinh) ethnic students account for 24%, and students from other ethnic groups account for 11.2%); and (3) students from the remaining language groups including the H-Mong Dao, Mon-Khmer, Kadai, Han, and Tibeto-Burman language groups collectively account for 10.7%.

Out of the ten students I chose, five students were from the Tay-Thai language group. Further, I recruited three students from Viet-Muong language group, two students from the Vietnamese (Kinh) majority ethnic group and one student from Muong ethnic group. I purposefully included two Vietnamese ethnic students because I wanted to find out why the local governments appointed a quite high number of ethnic majority students to study in this program. Also, I wanted to explore how these students identify themselves. I chose two students from the remaining language groups, specifically, one student from the Tibeto-Burman language group and one student from the Mon-Khmer language group. Although these language groups account for only 10.7% of the total number of the students in the Department, I decided to choose two students among them because they include groups from many different language groups. Among these ten students, I chose 3 male students and 7 female students. This choice was based on the gender proportions among the third and fourth year students: out of 136 third and fourth year students, 46 (34%) are male and 90 (66%) are female.

Recruitment

After choosing the number of students based on their proportionate representation, I recruited volunteers to participate in the study, in consultation with Department faculty. The student volunteers had to meet the following criteria to be recruited: (1) they must belong to the learner group appointed by the local governments to study at the University; (2) if possible, they should be key students in the class. This means that they might be student representatives, peer advisors, etc., because these students often participate in many activities, and therefore, can provide me with a lot of information; (3) students should be articulate; (4) students have to be enthusiastic enough and be available for at least two interview sessions.

In order to recruit faculty members, I first tried to contact individuals that I had previously met, and whom I thought might be potential participants for the study. For individuals I had not yet met, I asked "third parties" – my friends, my colleagues, etc. to help introduce me to them. However, I tried not to depend too much on third parties for making contact with participants. They helped me with the first stage – "gaining access" to potential participants, but I took the initiative to make actual contact and, more importantly, to explain my project to potential participants. I did this because "building the interviewing relationship begins the moment the potential participant hears of the study. Third parties may be very familiar with potential participants, but they can seldom do justice to the nature of someone else's project" (Seidman, 1998, p. 39). I recruited students by asking faculty members to recommend a pool of potential subjects and then met them in a group to describe and explain my research and ask for volunteers if interested.

Seidman (1998) suggests various ways of making contact, such as via telephone or email, meeting with a group of potential participants, or meeting with individual potential participants. In my case, after having two separate meetings, one with all of the faculty members and another with a pool of students suggested by the Department to present my research project, I tried to arrange a separate individual contact visit with potential participants. This approach, according to Seidman, will "take time, money, and effort but it will be always well spent" because it will implicitly tell the potential participants that "I respect my work and you enough to want to make a separate trip to meet with you to explain the project" (Seidman, 1998, p.40). Moreover, because of cultural issues, potential participants, especially students, were sometimes reserved and shy. Therefore, by taking the initiative to contact potential participants in person, I could obtain a richer pool of potential participants. Based on the pool of potential participants that I obtained from this stage, I selected the most appropriate participants for my study, that is, those whose experiences matched well with the subject of my study. During the visit with individual potential participants, I explained in detail the nature of my research study, and I also expressed what they would be expected to do if they agreed to participate in my study research.

After the initial contact visit, I made phone calls to both those individuals who were selected and those who were not. The aim of this contact was to thank the potential participants for their time and interest, as well as to confirm the schedule of interview appointments with the selected participants. According to Seidman, such details are kind of onerous for the researcher at first, yet they are necessary because poor communication can have a negative result in the enthusiasm of participants. Some participants show their lack of

enthusiasm for the process because "he or she feels asked to give a great deal while being offered very little consideration in return" (Seidman, 1998, p. 43).

Participant Database

The database I kept included basic information on the participants such as their home and work address, email address, telephone numbers, the best time that to contact them and the time to avoid contacting them, etc. This database also included information related to interview sessions: the best times, places, and dates to interview participants. I let the participants decide the time and the place for interview sessions. This was very important because it made the participants feel that they were respected and that their participation was completely voluntary. The interviews with faculty members were conducted in the Department's office and the interviews with the students were conducted in my office, which is very quiet, and very convenient for students as it is on campus where all the students were living. The students agreed to go to my office for the interviews since they do not have offices of their own.

Table 4.2 and 4.3 below show some characteristics of participants in my research.

Table 4.2. Participant Characteristics - Faculty

	Name[10]	Ethnicity	Gender	Age	Position	Working Time in the Department (years)
1.	Dang	Nung	Male	65	Full-time	17
2.	Dinh	Kinh	Male	42	Full-time	4
3.	Pham	Kinh	Female	36	Full-time	6
4.	Tran	Tay	Female	29	Full-time	7
5.	Trinh	Kinh	Male	52	Sessional	17

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[10] All faculty members' names have been changed to protect the participants' anonymity

Table 4.3. Participant Characteristics - Students

	Name[11]	Ethnicity	Gender	Age	Year of Study
1.	Chi	Tay	Female	23	4th
2.	Khoi	Xinh Mun	Male	21	3rd
3.	Hang	Nung	Female	22	4th
4.	Gia	Thai	Male	24	3rd
5.	Lan	Phu La	Female	26	4th
6.	Mai	Kinh	Female	21	3rd
7.	Nga	Kinh	Female	21	3rd
8.	Phuong	Muong	Female	23	3rd
9.	Thu	Thai	Female	24	4th
10.	Trung	Tay	Male	22	3rd

Data Collection

The primary methods of data collection were (1) collection of government policy documents on higher education and on requirements for cultural staff who work in ethnic minority areas; (2) collection of documents on the current curriculum for the BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures; (3) participant observation in classrooms, around the department and in social settings; and (4) interviews with faculty members and students.

Government Documents

I selected relevant government's policies documents concerned with higher education for ethnic minority students, ethnic minority cultures, and cultural staff who work in ethnic minority areas. I looked at different sources such as provisions related to education and culture, websites related to education and culture, magazines, books, articles, and research documents. I finally chose to focus on the following sources to analyze the government' policies at the national level: (1) an anthology of educational laws and policies regarding

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[11] All students' names have been changed to protect the participants' anonymity

teachers and students (Labour – Society Publishing House, 2002); (2) an anthology of regulations for ethnic minority groups (Labour Publishing House, 2001); (3) an anthology of national laws encompassing the fields of culture, society, education, sports, tourism, technology and environment (National Politics Publishing House, 2001); (4) an anthology of laws regarding social and cultural issues in Vietnam (National Politics Publishing House, 2002); (5) an anthology of work regarding culture and information in ethnic minority and mountainous areas (Ministry of Culture and Information, 2003); (6) the website of the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training; (7) the website of the Higher Education Department of the Ministry of Education and Training in Vietnam; (8) the website of the Ministry of Culture and Information in Vietnam; and (9) Ethnology Magazine in Vietnam.

Institutional Data

In the beginning, I planned to explore institutional sources such as the website of the Hanoi University of Culture, and specifically the website of the Department of Ethnic Minority Culture, all the textbooks currently used in the program, course outlines, and teaching materials for courses that do not have yet textbooks. These materials are designed by the faculty members who are in charge of teaching these courses. Other materials I had also planned to look at were the professional periodical of the Department (which includes research articles by faculty members, students and experts in the field of ethnic minority cultures) and collections of scientific research by students. However, in the process of material selection, the sources that were finally available to analyze included: (1) information extracted from the website of the Hanoi University of Culture, particularly the website of the Department of Ethnic Minority Culture; (2) the textbooks currently used in the programs; and (3) the detailed description of the program's curricular structure.

Not all data was available for the following reasons. First, the Department had not published any professional periodical magazines. Second, the Department does plan to publish a collection of research conducted by ethnic minority students. However, because of a shortage of academic staff who would be in charge of supervising students to conduct this kind of research, this plan has not come to fruition. At the moment, besides teaching, faculty members in the Department are responsible for other administrative duties such as working as liaison teachers. Third, because of limited time, I could not meet with all 24 faculty members to ask them for the teaching materials that they designed for the particular courses that they are now teaching. Moreover, I was sensitive to the fact that it could be at times inappropriate to ask faculty members to share the teaching materials that they prepare themselves.

Participant Observation

The observation process included observations of both physical and social settings. I made observations on the physical teaching and learning infrastructure and environment in the Department. All information related to design and decoration in the Department, classrooms, meeting rooms, etc., was noted down. I found the observation on the physical setting very meaningful because what I observed could tell me in some measure about the "imagined communities" that the university as well as the Department envisioned for the students. For example, I observed that there is no particular space for ethnic minority students in the University. All the students including ethnic minority students share the same style of learning and teaching environment: classrooms, library, reading rooms, etc. The social lounge of the Department is exactly the same as those of other departments in the university. On the wall of the Department's social lounge there are a lot of pictures showing

the events in the Departments and the pictures of some government officers who participated in these events. Also, there is a bookshelf in the social lounge, and on the top of this bookshelf, there are some artifacts of some ethnic minority groups.

Working as a liaison teacher helped me a lot with the social setting process. There are four different options of observations that a researcher can choose including: (1) complete participant, when the researcher conceals his or her role; (2) observer as participant, when the role of research is known; (3) participant as observer, when the observation role is secondary to participant role; (4) complete observer: researcher observes without participating (Creswell, 2003, p.186). For my research, I chose to be an observer as participant. The position of the liaison teacher for class Ethnic Minority Cultures 10B was a great chance to conduct a close observation of the teaching and learning activities in the Department. For the first two weeks I participated in all the classes that my students had to take. This was not only to observe the teaching and learning activities, but more importantly, to allow my students to become familiar with me and to build a closer relationship with them. After that, I went to class three times per week but kept constant information on the teaching and learning in the class through some key informants in the class. In addition, I held formal meetings with all the students in the class and had informal conversations with students during breaks between classes. In the formal meetings we designed class activities and I received feedback about class material, lectures, and teaching methods. Through the informal conversations I also received rich information from the students regarding not only their studies but also their ideas about their life in the lowlands, wishes for their current and future lives, etc.

Interviews

All interviews were conducted in Vietnamese because all participants can communicate effectively and fluently in Vietnamese. Ethnic minority students in Vietnam start learning Vietnamese in school when they are very young.

In the first stage of the study, I conducted two types of interviews with faculty members. To begin with, a structured interview was conducted with each of the faculty members. This structured interview had the same questions for all faculty members (Appendix A). The questions were designed to explore: (1) the faculty members' expectations for the students who were currently enrolled in the program; (2) their evaluation on current curriculum for the program; (3) their experiences with ethnic minority students and the typical teaching methods that they use to teach ethnic minority students; and (4) their ideas about current teaching and learning conditions as well as the ideal learning conditions for students of this program. After analyzing each interview, I had a second round of interviews with each faculty member. This session was an unstructured, open-ended interview. The purpose of the second interview session was to clarify and extract more information from their discussions with me in the structured interview.

Besides interviewing faculty members, I conducted a structured interview with ten students (Appendix B). This structured interview was aimed to find out: (1) their learning objectives; (2) their evaluation on the current curriculum, teaching methods for the program; (3) their viewpoints about teaching and learning environment in the Department as well as in the university; and (4) their experiences as ethnic minority students (with the obvious exception of the Kinh students). The findings of this interview were then used to structure more in-depth interviews with these same ten students. These interviews followed up on

themes identified in the first structured interview and, in general, sought to understand: (1) how the students perceived the value of their education; (2) how they perceived the role of their ethnic systems of values in influencing their attitudes towards education; (3) how they envisioned themselves in their future careers, in their place in the Vietnamese nation, and in their respective indigenous communities.

Seidman (1998, pp. 63-77) suggests twenty detailed techniques that should be considered during the interviewing process. Among these twenty techniques, I picked out ten of that I found most useful and applied them in conducting interviews for this study. They are: (1) listen more, talk less; (2) follow up on what the participant says; (3) ask questions when you do not understand; (4) explore, don't probe; (5) avoid leading questions; (6) ask open-ended questions; (7) follow up, don't interrupt; (8) ask participants to tell a story; (9) share experiences on occasion; and (10) tolerate silence.

Data Analysis

I applied two different data analysis techniques. Ethnographic content analysis (ECA) defined by Altheide (n.d) was used to analyze government and curriculum documents. According to Altheide, ECA is an integrated procedure for locating, identifying, retrieving and analyzing documents for their relevance, significance, and meaning. This methodology underscores the discovery and description of patterns and processes in texts, rather than looking for "mere quantity or numerical relationships between two or more variables." Thematic coding was used for interview and observation data.

Government Policy and Curriculum Documents

In the analysis, through different sources related to national government's policies, I searched for understanding of: (1) government's policy towards education for ethnic minority

students; and (2) the government's expectations of students who will be cultural staff in ethnic minority groups and how these are promoted through the BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures. In order to determine the latter, I analyzed the following elements of the BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures: (1) training objectives of the program; and (2) the structure of the program. From the analysis process, I used the following questions to construct a protocol.

Protocol for Data Analysis:

- What imagined communities does the government envision for ethnic minority students?

    o What are the educational policies that the government applied to ethnic minority students?

    o What is the content of these policies?

    o What is the government's viewpoint towards ethnic minority students?

    o Which communities does the government think ethnic minority students are supposed to serve after they graduate from their universities?

- What imagined communities does the government envision for students who will work as cultural staff in ethnic minority areas?

    o What are the requirements does the government expect for cultural staff in ethnic minority areas?

    o What are the specific tasks that cultural staff in ethnic minority areas have to fulfill?

- o Which roles does the government think cultural staff in ethnic minority areas are supposed to play in their communities?
- How are the imagined communities envisioned by the government for cultural staff in ethnic minority areas promoted through the BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures in the Department of Ethnic Minority Cultures at the Hanoi University of Culture?
  - o What is the training objective of the program?
  - o What is the curricular structure of the program?
  - o What kinds of knowledge are taught in the program?
  - o How much time is used for each kind of knowledge?
  - o Which language is used as the language of instruction in the program?

Through government policy at the national and institutional level, I tried to answer the above questions by looking for discernable patterns in the data. This pattern would show the imagined communities that the government envisions for ethnic minority students through the BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures at the Hanoi University of Culture.

Interviews and Observations

Creswell (2003, pp. 191-195) suggests six steps in data analysis and interpretation. They are: (1) organize and prepare the data for analysis; (2) obtain a general sense of the information and reflect on its overall meaning; (3) begin detailed analysis with a coding process; (4) use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis; (5) advance how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative; and (6) make interpretation or meaning of the data.

I applied the six above-mentioned steps to the process of analysis and interpretation interviews and observations conducted in my research.

Step 1: I first transcribed the interviews, and then arranged data into two different sources of information: Information obtained from faculty members, and information obtained from students.

Step 2: I tried to answer the following questions suggested by Creswell (2003): (1)What general ideas are participants expressing?; (2) What is the tone of the ideas?; (3) What is the general impression of the overall depth, credibility, and use of the information?

Step 3: I coded the transcriptions of the interviews. Eight steps for "coding process" suggested by Tesh were used for this "coding process":

1. Get a sense of the whole. Read all the transcriptions carefully. Perhaps jot down some ideas as they come to mind.

2. Pick one document (i.e., one interview) – the most interesting one, the shortest, the one on the top of the pile. Go through it, asking yourself "what is it about?" Do not think about the "substance" of the information but its underlying meaning. Write thoughts in the margin.

3. When you have completed this task for several informants, make a list of all topics. Cluster together similar topics. Form these topics into columns that might be as major topics, unique topics, and leftovers.

4. Now take this list and go back to your data. Abbreviate the topics as codes and write the codes next to the appropriate segment of the text. Try this preliminary organizing scheme to see if new categories and codes emerge.

5. Find the most descriptive wording for your topics and turn them into categories. Look for ways of reducing your total list of categories by grouping topics that relate to each other. Perhaps draw lines between your categories to show interrelationships.

6. Make a final decision on the abbreviation for each category and alphabetize these codes.

7. Assemble the data materials belonging to each category in one place and perform a preliminary analysis.

8. If necessary, recode your existing data. (Tesh, as cited in Cresswell, 2003, p.192)

Step 4: Based on the results of the coding process, I gave descriptions of the observation setting and of the participants' viewpoints. Then I again tried to generate some main themes or categories from these descriptions. These categories were used as major findings for my research study.

Step 5: All the information obtained from the first four steps helped me render narratives of: (1) faculty members' viewpoints about the current curriculum for the BA program in Ethnic Minority Culture Studies and their teaching experiences; and (2) students' perceptions of their identity, their participation in the program, the tensions they face as ethnic minority students, and their future careers and place in the Vietnamese nation and in their respective indigenous communities. All of the interview sessions were audiotaped and then transcribed verbatim. The transcription of the interviews with each participant was sent to him/her after each session of interview for correction, amendment and editing prior to

being included in the report of my research study. Participants' wishes to either change opinions or add other ideas for the issues raised in previous interviews was fully respected.

Step 6: I interpreted the data. The interpretation was then compared with the literature review on Aboriginal education in Canada and New Zealand. Also, research findings were evaluated to see how they may inform government policy-makers and, if addressed adequately, might respond to the identified needs of ethnic minority students and their communities.

Methodological Limitations

The primary method of obtaining data from participants was face-to-face interviews. It is possible that some participants did not express their true attitudes and opinions about all issues. It is also possible that some of these participants did not feel completely anonymous and, thus, did not express all the ideas that they held or would have liked to share. For example, some interviewees edited out a lot of information from their interview transcriptions that I do not discuss in this research paper.

It also would have been ideal if I had been able to interview some staff working in local communities who employ students from the BA in Ethnic Minority Cultures after graduation. Because of time limitations, I was not able to conduct these interviews. Obtaining such information would have given me another viewpoint to see if the curricula are useful for employment after graduation and if the opinions of students remain constant after they return to their local communities.

I also lack information on what activities the cultural staff in local communities actually carry out from day to day. It is difficult for me to tell how such staff carry out their work, interact with the local communities, and the nature of the relationship between such

staff and the local ethnic minority groups. The students who conducted practical fieldwork in such areas did provide me with some information. However, I would have like to have observed such activities first-hand.

Assumptions

Any conclusions drawn from this study rest upon several important assumptions: (1) the existence of imagined communities; (2) the idea that different imagined communities may co-exist, depending on the viewpoint of the imaginer; (3) the faculty and students I selected are representative of the faculty and students at the Hanoi University of Culture; (4) the viewpoints obtained from my interviews and document analysis are the most relevant for investigating the imagined communities of ethnic minority students in higher education.

Summary

In this study, the framework of "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991) was used to analyze national governmental policies on ethnic minorities, curriculum and pedagogy in the Department of Ethnic Minority Culture Studies at the Hanoi University of Culture, Vietnam, and the views of professors and students in the department. Three months of field research using ethnographic methods included an analysis of national and institutional policy documents, participant observation in the department and at the university, interviews with professors in the Ethnic Minority Cultures program at HUC, and interviews with students enrolled in the BA program. The findings of the study are presented in the next three chapters, beginning with an analysis of government policy and institutional perspectives on ethnic minority students.

CHAPTER FIVE: OFFICIAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF STUDENTS

This chapter provides findings from the analysis of government policy at the national and institutional level, in the Department of Ethnic Minority Cultures at the Hanoi University of Culture. The first part gives a description of the imagined communities that the government envisions for ethnic minority students and for students who will work as cultural staff in ethnic minority areas. The second part portrays how these imagined communities are promoted through the BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures.

Communities Envisioned in Government Policy

First, the government's vision for ethnic minority students can be seen through different provisions of the educational law. In general, the government envisions ethnic minority students first as members of the Vietnamese nation. Within this common community they are envisioned first as a group of disadvantaged society members. They are also imagined as Vietnamese speaking students under the state schooling system. Second, ethnic minority students are envisioned as belonging to their local communities. They are seen as elite minorities and are expected to be key human resources in their local community. For students who will work as cultural staff in ethnic minority areas, some general requirements and six specific tasks that cultural staff are expected to fulfill show that students are imagined with diverse roles by the government. They are: loyal nationalists, cultural ambassadors, and cultural enhancers. The portrayals of ethnic minority students are promoted quite clearly through the BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures.

Disadvantaged Vietnamese Citizens

The Vietnamese government envisions ethnic minority students first of all belonging to a common community – the Vietnamese nation. The government categorizes ethnic

minority students as a group of people in society who need special help and support for education. The reason that the government offers preferential policies for ethnic minority students is not because of ethnicity but because ethnic minority students often come from areas of severe social and economic conditions.

Provision 77 of the Educational Law established the policy on scholarships and social welfare. This document lists the individuals who qualify to receive scholarships as well as tuition fee reduction or waivers. This provision states the following: (1) the government has a policy of offering scholarship for students in good standing at vocational, higher education and post-graduate level institutions; for students who are selected and appointed by the local governments to attend educational institutions to study; for students at schools of pre-university training, boarding schools, and vocational schools for people with a disability and soldiers with wounds; and (2) the government issues a policy of subsidizing, reducing and waiving tuition fees for learners who are qualified to receive preferential status, for ethnic minority people who live in areas of particularly hard social and economic conditions, for orphans with no caregivers, and for people who have a particularly hard financial status but overcome difficulties to study (Labour – Society Publishing House, 2002).

The above provision shows that the Government puts ethnic minority students within the spectrum of disadvantaged society members who require preferential policies in order to support their education. This group includes all people who have difficulties in pursuing their education such as orphans, disabled people, wounded soldiers, etc.

Vietnamese-Speaking Students

In addition to students' ethnic minority languages, all ethnic minority students are envisioned to be fluent in Vietnamese to pursue their education in the state schooling system.

Vietnamese is the only official language of instruction in educational institutions in Vietnam. This vision can be seen in *Provision 5 of the Educational Law*. It states that the Vietnamese language is the official language of instruction which is used in educational institutions. The provision also says that the Government creates conditions for ethnic minority people to learn spoken and written languages of their ethnic minority groups. The teaching and learning of ethnic minority languages are carried out under the government's regulations (Labour – Society Publishing House, 2002). However, the policy does not clearly state what these conditions are.

Elite Minorities

The ethnic minority students who are selected and appointed by the local governments to study in higher education are envisioned by the Vietnamese government as elites in their communities. This group of minority students is provided with scholarships for their study by the government and is expected to return to their respective ethnic minority group and serve their community.

Provision 78 of the Educational Law addresses the need to increase educational access for ethnic minority students. This provision describes the government policy on selecting and appointing excellent students to attend vocational schools, colleges and universities. The law states first that the government applies a "selecting and appointing students" policy to students who belong to ethnic groups located in disadvantaged areas in order to train and educate staff for these areas. Second, after graduation, the students have to take the positions to which the local sponsoring governments appoint them. The minimum working time in the local community is decided by the Provincial People's Committee of the province appointing students to study. If students do not follow the job appointment of the

local government concerning the kind of work and the place to work, they will have to refund all the training fees. Third, the local governments are responsible for selecting and appointing students who meet the requirements of the policy. The educational institutions are responsible for receiving the qualified students, and the local governments who appoint the students to study are responsible for arranging jobs for them after their graduation (Labour – Society Publishing House, 2002).

Key Human Resources

In the long-term, the government intends that ethnic minority student will be the main human resources in the development of areas with "particularly hard social and economic conditions" whose people really need help and support. The government's vision can be seen through *Provision 56 of the Educational Law*, in which the government specifies investment in improving infrastructure and building schools in ethnic minority areas. Under the law, the Government establishes day-boarding schools, boarding schools, and schools of pre-university training for ethnic minority children as well as for children of other ethnic groups whose family permanently lives in the areas of particularly hard social and economic condition. This is done in order *to contribute to the human resource development in these areas*; all such schools are given preferential treatment in terms of teaching staff, infrastructure, equipment and budget (Labour – Society Publishing House, 2002).

This vein of thought can be also seen very clearly in the above mentioned *Provision 78 of Educational Law*, which describes the policy of "selecting and appointing students" from "ethnic groups located in the areas with severely hard economic and social conditions." The government notes that the aim of this policy is "to train and educate staff for these areas" (Labour – Society Publishing House, 2002, p. 46- 47). The government's vision is promoted

through all of the regulations that students who attend universities under the policy of "selecting and appointing students" have to meet after their graduation such as "job appointment," "minimum working time in the local communities," or "training fee refund" if students do not follow all the regulations.

Loyal Nationalists

The Government pays attention above all to the political ideology of cultural staff. The first qualification that cultural staff in ethnic minority areas need is to have "steadfast viewpoints of political ideology, and be clear-headed in informing political and social issues" (Ministry of Culture and Information, 2003, p. 75). Cultural staff in ethnic minority areas must "be aware of firstly the line, the standpoint and the policies on culture of the Vietnamese Communist Party and the Government" (Ministry of Culture and Information, 2003, p. 73). They are also expected to have knowledge about State management policies, cultural information, and sports activities such as "being aware of the system of legal documents on culture, information and sports" (Ministry of Culture and Information, 2003, p. 75). All of these requirements show that the government envisions cultural staff in ethnic minority areas as adopting official government views and being loyal to the image of the Vietnamese Communist Party and the Government.

The government also expects that from the year 2005, cultural staff in communes will have to earn elementary or intermediate levels of education in the cultural field, and district cultural staff will have to obtain either associate or undergraduate degrees in the cultural field. This expectation shows that the government envisions these "loyal nationalists" as well-educated labour resources who contribute to the improvement of cultural life in these areas.

Cultural Ambassadors

Cultural staff in ethnic minority areas are also envisioned as cultural ambassadors for the Vietnamese government's image. Cultural staff must be aware of the line, the standpoint and the policies on culture of the Vietnamese Communist Party and the government; to "propagandize the policies to ethnic minority people, especially the policies on solidarity of the whole nation, on ethnic minority issues, religion, socio-economic development" (Ministry of Culture and Information, 2003, pp. 44 - 45). Cultural staff who will work in ethnic minority areas are also required to:

> ...understand the political, economic, social, secure and national defense duty of the local communities; understand cultural tradition, customs, religion of ethnic minority groups in the area where they work; and should know the language of at least one ethnic minority group in the area where they work. (Ministry of Culture and Information, 2003, pp. 75 - 76)

The government imagines cultural staff to have enthusiasm and a close relationship with community members where they work. Cultural staff in ethnic minority areas are supposed to "be enthusiastic and have to adhere to cultural activities as well as to the people in these areas"; they also need "to be trusted by the communities' members that they serve." (Ministry of Culture and Information, 2003, p. 75). More importantly, cultural staff are envisioned as "role models" for local people in ethnic minority areas in terms of "conforming to the Government' policies and actively participate in all the local activities" (Ministry of Culture and Information, 2003, p. 76). Cultural staff are also expected to assist local governments to regulate culture and information. For example, they have to give instructions on carrying out the government's lines and policies on culture and information; inspect cultural activities in the local community; make sure that cultural services in local communities conform to the government's laws; fight against harmful culture; get rid of

superstition and social evils; and construct democratic regulations, village regulations and cultural regulations (Ministry of Culture and Information, 2003).

Cultural Enhancers

Cultural enhancer is another role that the government envisions for cultural staff in ethnic minority areas. They are expected to construct and carry out cultural ways of life in their communities. For example, the living environment has to be clean, beautiful and safe; communities' members must have wholesome political ideology and a civilized lifestyle; communities' members must be law-abiding people; they must know how to help each other in difficult situations; they must help each other raise their material life, eradicate hunger and alleviate poverty, and be creative in labour (Ministry of Culture and Information, 2003). Moreover, cultural staff must preserve and enhance traditional ethnic culture in their communities and enhance education on patriotic traditions for community members. They must pay attention to the preservation and development of ethnic minority cultures and develop cultural staff, especially cultural staff who are ethnic minority people. (Ministry of Culture and Information, 2003).

Another task that cultural staff are assumed to do is popularizing local culture in ethnic minority areas. They have to organize and maintain cultural activities in cultural institutions in their communities and attract people of all classes to create, popularize, and enjoy culture. Cultural staff must pay particular attention to people who live in severely disadvantaged areas and in the ethnic minority areas. They must also improve the quality of cultural and sport activities in order to meet increasing demands of the people (Ministry of Culture and Information, 2003).

Communities Promoted through the BA Program

The BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures is a four-year program, which is structured with 243 credits, equal to 2,733 hours. The credit structure of the program is as follows:

1. Introductory knowledge: 110 credits, equal to 1,136 hours

2. Professional knowledge: 142 credit, equal to 1,597 hours

    a. Foundations of professional knowledge: 27 credits, equal to 304 hours

    b. Professional knowledge: 95 credits, equal to 1,068 hours

    c. Fieldwork: 10 credits, equal to 112 hours

    d. Thesis: 10 credits, equal to 112 hours

Within this curriculum, its training objectives, and the content of introductory and professional knowledge reflect quite clearly the visions in national government policy for ethnic minority students detailed in the previous section, and particularly for students who will work as cultural staff in ethnic minority areas.

Training Objectives: Loyal Multi-functional Staff

The general aim of the program is to train human resources at the BA level. After graduation, the students are expected to have an understanding of the customs, psychology and characteristics of ethnic minority groups in Vietnam in order to conduct research, and to collect, preserve, organize and govern cultural activities in ethnic minority areas. This general aim is elaborated into a more detailed training objective with three different requirements: (1) morals and ideology; (2) professional knowledge; and (3) professional skills. The requirement of morals and ideology is described as the first standard that students of this program must meet. The students of the BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures need

to have a steadfast standpoint and ideology; adopt a judicious viewpoint; master the policies of the Communist Party; and completely faithful to the revolutionary work of the Communist Party and the Government. The students of this program must also demonstrate wholesome morals and a virtuous way of life. Concerning professional ethics, students have to be properly proud of ethnic minority cultures and have enthusiasm for cultures of ethnic minority groups. As far as professional knowledge is concerned, after graduation, the students are expected to be proficient in four basic professional areas: (1) master knowledge of customs, psychology, and cultures of ethnic minority groups; (2) master basic knowledge of reasoning and professional skills of the culture field; (3) master laws towards ethnic minority cultures; and (4) know how to organize work related to ethnic minority cultures. Besides the requirement of professional knowledge, the students of this program are also expected to obtain some professional skills. These are: (1) be able to organize, carry out work related to culture, and conduct research and preserve cultural values of ethnic minority areas; and (2) be able to evaluate cultural activities in local communities.

Government visions of political ideology for ethnic minority students are clearly shown in the training objectives of the BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures. Comparing the specific tasks that the government envisions for cultural staff in ethnic minority areas with the requirements of professional knowledge and skills that the BA program in Ethnic Minority areas expects for their students, I observed that the government's overall imagination for cultural staff in ethnic minority areas was well promoted through the training objectives of this program at the Hanoi University of Culture.

Introductory Knowledge: Emphasis on National Ideology

Introductory knowledge is the common compulsory knowledge for all the universities in Vietnam. This curriculum is basically taught the same way in most universities. All the basic requirements of theory, ideology, and orientation are similar. However, besides all the common compulsory courses that all universities must teach, other courses are suitable to the particular educational purposes of each university.

The content of introductory knowledge mainly provides students with general background on the Vietnamese Communist Party and government, introduction to Vietnamese history, culture and society and basic skills needed for staff such as foreign languages and computer skills. In the introductory knowledge part, special emphasis is placed on national ideology, specifically courses which provide students with knowledge of the Vietnamese Communist Party and the government's lines and policies. These include, for example, "Marxist-Leninist Philosophy," "Marxist-Leninist Political Economy," "Scientific Socialism," "The History of the Vietnamese Communist Party," and "Ho Chi Minh Ideology." This part of knowledge accounts for 40% of compulsory courses of the introductory part. This clearly expresses the imagined communities that the government envisions for all students, including ethnic minority students. Students are envisioned as being well aware of the government's political ideology so that they can be faithful to the position and policies of the government. The knowledge of the Vietnamese Communist Party and the government's position and policies materializes the government's imagined communities concerning national political ideology for all students, including students who will work as cultural staff in ethnic minority areas.

Professional Knowledge: Theory over Practice

In the professional knowledge section, time allotted for courses that focus on theory exceeds that for courses on practical knowledge. Seven out of eight required courses (25 out of total 27 credits) of the foundation of professional knowledge relate to theoretical knowledge (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1. Courses of the Foundation of Professional Knowledge

	Courses	Credits
Theoretical Knowledge	Introductory courses: anthropology, archeology, arts studies, folklore culture, and religious studies	20
	Cultural geography of ethnic minority groups in Vietnam	2
	Ethnic groups in Vietnam	3
	Total Credits:	**25**
Practical Knowledge	Ethnic fieldwork methodology	2

Among 17 required courses of professional knowledge, shown in Table 5.2, 12 courses (38 credits out of total 51 credits) provide students with theoretical knowledge. There are only five courses related to organizing cultural activities directly related to practical professional skills that students need for their future careers.

Table 5.2. Compulsory Courses of Professional Knowledge

	Required Courses	Credits
Theoretical Knowledge	- Courses of Ethnic minority cultures in different areas: Northwest; Northeast; Truong Son-Highland; coastal areas of the Mid and Mid-South; South	16
	- Courses on the Government's Policies: Laws on culture and information; Government's governance on culture and information in ethnic minority areas	6
	- Ethnic language studies	3
	- Ethnic demographic studies	3
	- Folklore cultures of ethnic minority groups in Vietnam	4
	- Contemporary cultures and arts of ethnic minority areas in Vietnam	4
	- Preservation of ethnic minority cultural heritage in Vietnam	2
	Total Credits:	**38**
Practical Knowledge	- Courses of Organizing Cultural Activities: organize activities for cultural institutions in ethnic minority and mountainous areas; organize festivals in ethnic minority and mountainous areas; organize activities to propagandize the Government's policies in ethnic minority and mountainous areas; organize activities to construct cultural ways of life in ethnic minority and mountainous areas; and organize art activities in ethnic minority and mountainous areas	13

The elective courses in Table 5.3 also provide students with supplementary knowledge to support the required of professional knowledge and skills. However, students are not allowed to choose courses; it is the Department which decides what courses to teach among the list of elective courses.

Table 5.3. Elective Courses

	Elective courses (choose 22 credits among the following elective courses)	Credits
Theoretical Knowledge	- Courses of Ethnic Cultures of different groups: Tay-Nung; Thai; Muong; Cham; and Khome	10
	- Clothes of ethnic minority groups in Vietnam	2
	- House architecture of ethnic minority groups in Vietnam	2
	- Preservation of ethnic minority cultural heritage in Vietnam	2
	- Courses on the Government's Policies: public relations in ethnic minority areas; the Communist Party and Government's ethnic minority policies; office administration; and the structure of contemporary Vietnamese Government	11
	Total Credits:	**27**
Practical Knowledge	- Courses of Traditional art performance of different ethnic minority groups: Northwest; Northeast; Mid-South; South; and Truong Son-Highland	15
	- Courses of Organizing Cultural Activities: organize public art performance in ethnic minority areas; organize activities for cultural house and club in ethnic minority areas; Organize activities for cultural house and club in ethnic minority areas	6
	- Design scenarios for festivals in ethnic minority areas	2
	Total Credits:	**23**

On the surface, it is clear that the courses of professional knowledge designed for the BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures intend to provide students knowledge that serves their future careers as cultural staff in ethnic minority areas. Theoretically, students would be

able to apply this knowledge to fulfill their task as cultural staff in ethnic minority areas that the government expects cultural staff to fulfill.

Language of Instruction: Vietnamese

Vietnamese is the only language of instruction used in the BA program of Ethnic Minority Cultures. All the teaching materials are in Vietnamese, and Vietnamese is also used as the language of communication between professors and students in the class. Moreover, all the information posted in the website of the Department is in Vietnamese. This originates from the fact that the government has designated the official language of instruction in educational institutions as Vietnamese. Moreover, each ethnic minority group has their own language, and it might be difficult to give information in the languages of all ethnic minority groups. Also, students currently enrolled in this program are from many different ethnic minority groups, therefore, it is necessary to use a common language[12] as a language of instruction, though some of the faculty members in the Department can speak at least one ethnic minority language.

Summary

Pavlenko (2003) asserts that "the ideological function allows us to consider imagination not as a person attribute but as a terrain of struggle between different and often incompatible ideologies of language and identity in particular sociohistoric contexts" (p. 253). In Vietnamese context, the government envisioned ethnic minority students both belong to the Vietnamese nation and their local communities. Within Vietnamese nation, they are first envisioned as a group of disadvantaged members who need special help and second as Vietnamese speaking students in educational institutions. Within their local

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[12] In this case the language that are most common for all of ethnic minority students is Vietnamese because all ethnic minority students study Vietnamese from the time they are in primary schools

communities, they are considered elite minorities and key human resources. Specifically, as for students who will work as cultural staff in ethnic minority areas, the government envisioned them with different roles, basically the roles with the expectation that students will fulfill their two level functions: national and local levels. They are expected to be loyal to national ideology in order to propagandize the Government's policies to ethnic minority people. At the same time, they are also expected to adhere to the communities that they work in order to contribute to the preservation and enhancement of ethnic minority cultures. Many of these themes were also echoed by professors in the Hanoi University of Cultures. These findings are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX: COMMUNITIES ENVISIONED BY PROFESSORS

Professors' visions for ethnic minority students can be divided into three sections: their visions for students in a learning community (Hanoi University of Culture); in their working places (in ethnic minority areas) and in students' indigenous communities. In a learning community surrounded mostly by Kinh students, ethnic minority students were envisioned by professors as disadvantaged and therefore deficient in knowledge, skills and ability. Professors then offered their beliefs about appropriate pedagogy to address these perceived deficiencies. In their working place, professors envisioned students with different roles such as cultural organizers, policy consultants, and masters of ceremonies. And in terms of students' role in their indigenous communities, professors have two basic different ideas about their positions. Some professors considered them as "planted seeds" of their communities; others thought of them as replaceable staff.

Ethnic Minority Students as Disadvantaged

Most of the professors thought that ethnic minority students had a limited ability to comprehend new knowledge. According to them, the reasons were mostly due to certain disadvantages that ethnic minority students are faced with, such as poor primary and secondary educational conditions, geographical locations, and social conditions. The professors found that these disadvantages have had a negative effect on the ethnic minority students' competence in knowledge acquisition. Professor Trinh affirmed, for example, that:

> ..in the Department, there are many ethnic minority students who were selected and appointed by the local governments to attend this program without taking the university entrance examination. Therefore their study competence is still limited. It is a fact...In terms of knowledge level, there are certain things that make students in the Department not as good as those in other departments at the university. For example, there are ethnic minority students in the Department who have never had any chance to study any foreign language.

According to Professor Trinh, ethnic minority students in the Department have difficulties in studying English when they attend the university because English courses are taught in the same manner for all students, regardless of their preparation. This disadvantages minority students who had little or no chance to study English when they were in high school. She thought that it is too difficult for ethnic minority students to study English in a five-period class (3 hours and 75 minutes). Professor Trinh concluded that in general, ethnic minority students could not gain knowledge as well as those who study in urban, lowland schools.

Professor Pham also shared the idea that early educational disadvantages affect ethnic minority students' university study, noting that they are "selected and appointed by local governments, who come from particularly disadvantaged communes." Professor Pham reported that some of these communes do not even have high schools, and that students who live in such communes have to travel to high schools in other places. Good teachers do not often go to teach in mountainous areas either. According to her, a lack of opportunities for quality education disadvantages these students. However, she also hesitantly offered another explanation: "it seems that ethnic minority students' logical thinking and reasoning are not high." According to her, the ability of logical thinking and reasoning of ethnic minority students and the disadvantages that they have to cope with are related to each other. She said: "On the one hand, because ethnic minority students have a shortage of knowledge they do not have competence in logic, reasoning, and synthesizing information." However, for her, it was also very possible that these two issues are not related to each other. She said: "One issue belongs to biology, and the other one belongs to anthropology. It is not yet clear if these two issues interplay with each other or if it is ethnic minority students whose ability of logic and reasoning is not good."

Other disadvantages like geographical and social conditions were also mentioned by the professors as causes that affect ethnic minority students' ability to comprehend new knowledge:

> Professor Dang: Ethnic minority students live far from the capital. Because they live in mountainous areas, they rarely have the chance to travel, and people from other places rarely go to their areas as well. Not traveling leads to less contact with other people. Having less contact means having less information. Having less information leads to the fact that ethnic minority students do not understand even some very ordinary concepts.

Professor Dinh also mentioned this disadvantage. He asserted that because ethnic minority students have less opportunities for social contact with outsiders, they are often more reserved than the majority and this characteristic affects their study in higher education.

Cultural Activity Organizers

The most prominent imagined community that the professors envisioned for ethnic minority students enrolled in the BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures after their graduation, in students' future work, was as cultural activity organizers in ethnic minority areas. According to professors, their visions are based on the reality of cultural life in ethnic minority nowadays, characteristics of the program, as well as some characteristics of ethnic minority students that seem to make them suitable for this role. This vision was also illustrated through their viewpoints about the skills and knowledge that they thought ethnic minority students enrolled in the program must master.

Professor Tran found that in ethnic minority areas, the most essential thing is to know how to organize and hold different cultural activities for people in communities. Therefore, according to her, skills in organizing and conducting cultural activities in ethnic minority areas were most important for students to master after they graduate. When I asked her which

fields ethnic minority students actually work in after they graduate from the program, she said:

> Based on the response of graduates of the programs, the students of my Department mainly work in the field of organizing and holding cultural activities. I think that there are also students of the Department that work in the field of research after their graduation. However, the number of students who work in the latter is often smaller.

I tried to explore why she envisioned ethnic minority students mainly as organizers of cultural activities in ethnic minority areas but not mainly as researchers on ethnic minority cultures. She stated that the first reason reflects employment demand. The demand for staff who work as organizers and holders of cultural activities seems larger than the demand for researchers. She added that students also experienced many difficulties when conducting research:

> Students in this Department do not major in either conducting research or organizing cultural activities. At the moment, students still study both of these two skills. Therefore, for example, sometimes students are asked to conduct research on certain topics, but their competence does not enable them to do it. This does not mean that they completely do not know how to conduct research but only that they will meet many difficulties--because during their study they are not trained deeply in conducting research.

Envisioning ethnic minority students as mainly organizers and holders of cultural activities, professor Tran believed that the professional knowledge section of the BA curriculum is very important for supporting students' skills in organizing cultural activities. This section of knowledge, in her opinion, provided students with knowledge of how to organize and hold cultural activities such as designing art programs for the public or organizing activities on cultural ways of life.

Sharing similar ideas with professor Tran about the communities that ethnic minority students will belong to after their graduation, professor Trinh thought that ethnic minority

students should be expected first to master knowledge to organize and hold cultural activities in ethnic minority areas. After that, people who have enough ability can be in charge of management work. He argued that not all people could be in charge of management work as well as conducting research. He then emphasized that "to begin with, after graduating from the program, students are expected to organize and hold cultural activities, together with local communities to consult on plans of cultural management or plans on preservation the values of ethnic minority cultures."

Besides the characteristics needed of a citizen loyal to her or his country, in terms of knowledge, Professor Trinh thought that there were two basic things that ethnic minority students need to be provided: theory of culture and professional practical knowledge. He then explained in detail these two requirements. He stated that students must know what culture is. This means that students need to broadly understand culture, based on scientific theory. For the second requirement he called for a program designed with adequate professional practical knowledge, because he found that this part of knowledge was not clearly constructed in the current program: "I think that the current courses in the program just provide students with knowledge. Ethnic minority students also need to be provided with "tools" for their work after they graduate. He thought that it is necessary, for example, to provide ethnic minority students with skills in how to organize and hold a festival, an exhibition, and a cultural day in ethnic minority areas. And according to him, it is essential to have people learn to write curriculum for such courses. Looking at the current courses in the program we can see that students will still have difficulty in practical tasks when they go to work.

Professor Trinh explained one of the reasons that lead to such a current program, which was focused more on theory than practice. He said the design of the program was still

partly under the control of the Ministry of Education and Training and a fact was that "there are certain issues that program designers found important, but the Ministry of Education and Training did not share the viewpoint." When I asked him about these issues, he said that when the Department designed the program, they could not decide all things by themselves. They were still under the control of the direction of Ministry of Education and Training about the curriculum framework and the number of credits that are allowed for a particular part of knowledge. He then elaborated that this was not only a problem of the Department as well as of the Hanoi University of Culture, but has also been a problem in the entire educational system in Vietnam for a long time – an educational system which focused mostly on knowledge but not on methods to approach and analyze issues:

> The weakness of education in Vietnam since 1976 until now is that we have not paid attention to teaching our students how to approach a problem and how to solve it. We have only paid attention to teaching our students knowledge. Knowledge is limitless. Students after graduation can still obtain knowledge because information nowadays is rich and diverse.

He emphasized that the most important thing now in his opinion is providing students with methods and approaches to deal with many different issues. I asked him to explain more how this viewpoint of providing knowledge and approaches to deal with different issues should be understood in teaching practice. He gave me an example:

> I take an example, when we organize and hold a festival; first, we need to point out different steps of organizing and conducting festivals. However, the more important thing is that we need to show other people what to do in order to have these steps.

He then added that another weakness of education in Vietnam now is that teaching methods as well as teaching and learning conditions have not been paid enough attention. He concluded that all of the above mentioned issues lead to the situation where students, from

the time they enroll in university to the time they graduate, are still not well-trained in doing their jobs.

Professor Dang asserted that the Department of Ethnic Minority Cultures in particular and the Hanoi University of Culture in general is a university for practice not for theory. However, according to him, practice without theory will become blind. This will lead to a situation where practice will be done in the wrong direction. Therefore, he expected that students could master theory but it is important for them to master both theory and their professional skills:

> Students who graduate from this program are not supposed to become "cultural officials" but "the people who practice culture," who will not only request other people to do but also participate directly in the development and preservation of ethnic minority cultures....This means that students are expected to gain both theory and practice. However, personally, I think that it is more important for students to know practice, like how to organize and hold festivals, musical shows, and how to propagandize the Government's policies to ethnic minority people.

I was wondering how about his expectations for students who would work as researchers in ethnic minority areas because I found that the program's objectives also include training students to become researchers. I asked: "So, besides students who will work as organizers and holders of cultural activities as mentioned above, how about students who will work as researchers in ethnic minority cultures? What are to-be researchers expected to do after graduating from this program?"

> Professor Dang: There are other universities and research institutes, which train students to become researchers. In this Department, we only teach students how to recognize issues in ethnic minority cultures that need research conducted on them.

He gave the example of working in an ethnic minority group. When a staff member finds an interesting traditional dance, or song, or festival of ethnic minority people in this group, she

or he needs to take note, record these cultural activities so that later she can report to research institutes so that people in these institutes can conduct research on these traditional cultural activities. He emphasized again, "students in this Department are only expected to recognize issues that need research. Graduates who work in research institutes later will have to build up their knowledge related to conducting research by themselves."

He stated that the current program was designed mainly under the direction of the Ministry of Education and Training, and also under the direction of the Ministry of Culture and Information and he found the program included a lot of theory, but not enough practice. He repeated his concept of the function of the Department was to train human resources for practicing culture, not human resources for studying theory and conducting research on ethnic minority cultures in local areas. Therefore, he found that the knowledge part which supported practical activities was important for students, and that the current program would probably include more practice, which would make it become more efficient. He also shared his experience discussing the needed knowledge and skills for students of the program with some employers in local provinces:

> I have also shared this idea with some local provinces, especially with some directors of local departments of culture. It is believed that the staff who graduated from our Department are often bad at practical activities. They think that students just need enough theory so that they don't go in the wrong direction. They need students who know how to conduct actual cultural activities for ethnic minority people.

By contrast, Professor Pham asserted that ethnic minority students who graduate from this program can also conduct research on ethnic minority cultures. However, she emphasized more about the first role – organizing and holding cultural activities. According to her, in order to organize and hold cultural activities in ethnic minority areas, first, ethnic minority students have to study about the cultures of ethnic groups. She confirmed that it is

compulsory for students to understand the prominent characteristics of the ethnic area where they work so that they will not design cultural activities or art programs which are too different from ethnic minority groups' traditions and customs. Another skill that she thought ethnic minority students should master in order to organize and hold cultural activities was their competence in arts performance:

> If you want to give guidance to ethnic minority people to do something, you yourself need to know how to do it. To ethnic minority people, you need to give them examples of movement so that they can learn from you. For example, if you teach them *Sap* dance, you have to know how to dance *Sap*[13]

However, according to her, the competence of art performing is still not the most important skill; the most important is competence in designing art and cultural programs. She argued that ethnic minority students have some strengths that possibly make them more suitable to the role of organizing and holding cultural activities. She thought that ethnic minority students are the people who understand their communities the best. Also, she found that ethnic minority students are very spontaneous. They are not often faultfinding themselves. Therefore, they often make progresses very fast. I wanted her to clarify this idea, she explained:

> "This means that they do not hesitate to participate in any learning activities just because of the fact that they are still not good. When they like some activities, they will attend. They do whatever they like. Therefore, their competence of accepting and changing is good. For example, they study very fast and very well in practical arts courses (dancing and singing).

She added that in fact, the learning conditions of ethnic minority students' lower study levels were very limited, but when they attend the program in the university, they have good opportunities to obtain many different sources of information, therefore, they have very good competence of knowledge acquisition.

She expressed her wish to adjust the structure of the program: "I want to increase the time for courses which provide students with skills in organizing cultural activities. I want the amount of time for these courses to be more than those concerning theory." She then also stated difficulties in adjusting the program: "However, the program still has to meet the common rules of training set up by the Ministry of Education and Training, therefore, what we want to change in the program is also very difficult to do."

Professor Dinh listed different fields that he thought ethnic minority students who study in the program can work in such as management, research and organizing and holding cultural activities. He asserted that usually, there are two main levels of workplaces where ethnic minority students may work. If they work in organizations or institutes in provinces, they are often in charge of research work. If they work at the commune level, they are often in charge of organizing cultural activities. He seemed to cling to the idea of work in organizing and holding cultural activities, although this was to be informed by cultural knowledge:

> According to me, it is necessary to pay more attention to providing students with knowledge and skills of organizing and holding cultural activities. It is more helpful for students when they graduate and go to work because as for research, if you understand research method, then you can conduct research. Methodology is a principle key of conducting research. But as for organizing and holding cultural activities, if you do not understand related issues you cannot do it. For example, for a traditional dance of an ethnic minority group, if you do not have deep knowledge of this ethnic minority group, you can not understand the meaning of this dance and what it is about.

He also shared the idea of increasing the amount of time for practical arts courses with professor Pham:

> I think that each course has its own role and courses are supplementary to each other. However, I believe that we should increase the amount of time

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[13] "sạp" dance is a traditional dance of Muong ethnic group.

for practical arts courses such as traditional dancing and singing because these courses will help students organize and hold cultural activities better and also these courses need a lot of time for students to learn and practice.

Policy Consultants

Professor Pham had another image of ethnic minority students after they graduated from the program. She thought that students could work as policy consultants for the provincial people's committee, or for a provincial department of ethnic minority and religion. Concerning the religion issue, she elaborated: "For example, student can consult about how religion issues are oriented." Consulting staff, according to her, must meet two criteria: a good understanding of ethnic minority cultures and good writing skills. She argued that the part of the BA curriculum about ethnic minority cultures divided by different areas can support students' understanding of cultures. According to her, students have to master the characteristics of each area. For example, which ethnic groups are located in the Northwest, what the typical cultures of these ethnic groups are, and what of their tangible and intangible cultures still exists? Based on this understanding, the skill that students have to obtain is to be able to give models of preservation to identify what needs to be collected and preserved. I asked her to explain more about the second criteria, good writing skills, that a policy consultant needs to have. She clarified:

> Students must know how to write projects, how to compose different kinds of documents to submit to the higher level about the issues of ethnic minority cultures. They need to understand which official level is responsible for which kind of issue, who is eligible to solve a particular kind of issue and to whom certain kinds of proposals should be submitted.

She concluded: "if we have this group of staff, they can understand what to do with each particular ethic minority group. It means that social policies need to be made based on traditions and customs of each ethnic minority group.

Masters of Ceremonies

Ethnic minority students were also envisioned working as Masters of Ceremonies (MCs) by Professor Dinh. He asserted that in some festivals or art programs in ethnic minority areas, students sometimes have to play the role of MC. Therefore, when I asked him: "What, if anything, would you like to see changed in the current curriculum of this program?" He responded: "we can include some other courses into the current program such as a course that provides students with Master of Ceremonies skills." He explained:

> This skill is also necessary. I would find it useful if we could include this subject in the program. Ethnic minority students often feel shy when they are in public. For example, in a class, sometimes if a student is called on to raise his voice, to give his own viewpoint, he will then be red in the face and sometimes not say anything. Therefore, I think that this course will help students be statelier and more self-confident.

He added that MC skills would also support the duty to propagandize the Government's policies to ethnic minority people:

> Also, one of the students' duties later when working in ethnic minority areas is to propagandize the Government's policies to ethnic minority people. Therefore, skills of an MC can help students to fulfill their duty. It is necessary for them to make ethnic minority people understand the Government's policies. Their propagandizing needs to be convincing so that ethnic minority people can listen to them and understand them.

He compared the nature of propagandizing the Government's policies with the job of a tour guide: "It is similar to a job of a tour guide. It is a duty of a tour guide to introduce and guide tourists in such a way that tourists can be satisfied and happy after they finish a tour."

"Seeds" Planted in the Community

Some professors envisioned ethnic minority students with special functions and values that they have in their ethnic minority communities. To them ethnic minority students were seen as "planted seeds" or "key staff" in their ethnic communities, though their

professional ability may not as good as that of Kinh students by the time they graduate from the program.

Professor Trinh clearly confirmed the special roles and values of ethnic minority students in their ethnic minority communities:

> We cannot make a comparison between ethnic minority students and Kinh students because an ethnic minority student who graduates from the program and goes back to their local areas in mountainous areas may not reach high professional effectiveness, but in terms of social meaning, ethnic minority students have their own independent and special value to their ethnic communities which Kinh students cannot replace.

I asked him to explore what special value he thought ethnic minority students have to their ethnic communities. He mentioned their cultural, political and social value to their ethnic communities. He emphasized again that "we cannot consider them as other ordinary students, we need to count to cultural, political and social meaning that they have. They are seeds." He also argued that because ethnic minority students are "seeds" of ethnic minority areas it should have been appropriate that preferential policies on scholarships and stipends for ethnic minority students must be far better than Kinh students.

Professor Tran also found that ethnic minority students play a very important role in their ethnic communities: "the role and position of ethnic minority students in their communities is really important. They were born there. It is them who understand their communities' traditions, customs and their people the best." She then gave me an example of ethnic minority students' special roles and positions in their ethnic communities.

> For instance, in the highlands, there have been some revolts, and ethnic minority people do not listen to the Kinh staff. But ethnic minority staff have many more advantages because they know the traditions so well, customs, and people, living conditions, and requirements of ethnic minority people. They, therefore, can find the best solutions for their communities' members.

She further distinguished between Kinh staff who have lived for a long time in ethnic minority areas and the ones who just go to ethnic minority areas to work after they finish the program. According to her, Kinh staff who have lived for a long time in ethnic minority areas, will not have many difficulties when they work in these areas because they have lived there since they were little kids together with their parents. They are considered as people who belong to ethnic minority people. Therefore, if they propagandize the Government's policies, ethnic minority people may see them as people of their communities. However, she found that even this group of Kinh staff might still have difficulties in languages and deeply understanding the customs and traditions of ethnic minority people.

Ethnic minority students were envisioned as "key staff" of ethnic minority areas by professor Dinh. Students (both ethnic minority and Kinh) graduate from the program should be able to work well in ethnic minority areas. However, having a lot of experience with ethnic minority people, professor Dinh also asserted that nobody can understand ethnic minority traditional cultures as well as ethnic minority students themselves. Therefore, he thought that it is worth it to provide ethnic minority students with deep and profound knowledge of ethnic minority and mountainous areas because this knowledge will help students to enhance their competence when they go back and serve their communities.

He admitted that Kinh students who graduate from the program can work in ethnic minority areas if they are enthusiastic and wholehearted in commitment to ethnic minority cultures. However, he pointed out some barriers in languages and understanding ethnic minority cultures and traditions when Majority Kinh work in ethnic minority areas. Although he believed that if Kinh ethnic students were competent and wholehearted they may replace ethnic minority students' in ethnic minority areas, he did not think that Kinh students could

completely do so. He confirmed that it is very good that ethnic minority students graduate and return to their communities and work for their communities because "they have their own strengths. They understand their own languages; they understand their people very well. They, therefore, have advantages in propagandizing the Government's policies to their communities' members."

When I asked him about the possibility that Kinh students could understand more about ethnic minority cultures once they work in ethnic minority areas, Professor Dinh claimed that the students from the lowlands who go to highlands to work can understand people and tradition of ethnic minority groups where they work. However, Kinh students' understanding will reach only a certain level of depth and this level of understanding will not match that of ethnic minority students themselves.

Replaceable Staff

In contrast to other faculty, Professor Dang and Professor Pham both thought that issues of cultural management and preservation in ethnic minority communities could be handled by cultural staff from both ethnic minority and majority Kinh backgrounds. According to them, whoever anyone could be placed in charge of ethnic minority cultures work:

> Professor Dang: General problems need to be solved in ethnic minority communities, but these are not specifically issues for ethnic minority people alone. Therefore, whoever has competence and is wholehearted in supporting ethnic minority cultures can be in charge of ethnic minority cultural work.

He noted that besides ethnic minority students who are appointed to study in the Department by the local government (who do not have to sit the national university entrance exam), the Department now also recruits students from the national university entrance examination.

This means that this program is not only for ethnic minority students, but for any student from any ethnic group who likes the field of ethnic minority cultures. They can now attend the program by passing the national university entrance exam. It also means that whoever is professionally qualified and has enthusiasm for ethnic minority cultures can work in this field in ethnic minority areas.

Professor Pham argued that it should be understood that ethnic minority cultures is a scientific field, therefore, anyone has the potential do well in this field. She also emphasized: "it is necessary to keep in mind that we need to train all staff (majoring in ethnic minority cultures), but not only give priority to training ethnic minority people." When I asked her ideas about the role of ethnic minority students who will work in their ethnic communities, she gave her explanation of strong and weak points of both ethnic minority and Kinh students who will work in ethnic minority areas. According to her, Kinh students who will work in the field have their own strengths. First, their visions are objective. They are outsiders, therefore, their visions are quite systematic and coherent. Ethnic minority students, in her opinion, also have their own strengths. They know their own languages and they live in their ethnic cultural environment. They have their visions from inside. Their visions are detailed, emotional and very profound. However, their visions may not be really systematic and coherent.

However, she also noted the advantages of ethnic minority students who enroll in the program. According to her, once students attend this program in the university both Kinh and ethnic minority students are provided with the competence of looking at ethnic minority cultures in a systematic way. Therefore, ethnic minority students have many advantages: they are insiders to their ethnic cultural environment; they know their own languages; once they

study here in the university, they have opportunities to obtain the "tools" to look at ethnic minority cultures in a clearer and more objective way; and psychologically, as for ethnic minority work, ethnic minority staff themselves are more easily accepted and welcome by ethnic minority people. Another advantage that she thought ethnic minority students can have is that students who graduate from the program will mainly work as organizers and holders of music and cultural activities in ethnic minority areas. What she believes is that ethnic minority students often have an inborn aptitude for arts: "They are very spontaneous. And doing arts, one needs to be spontaneous. They can acquire arts very fast. This is a favourable point of staff who work in the cultural field."

For Kinh students who want to work in ethnic minority cultures field, she found another strong point of them. She thought that Kinh students are sharp-witted and have well organized minds. Therefore, if they really like ethnic minority cultures and try to learn an ethnic minority language of the area where they work, they will have advantages in conducting research on ethnic minority cultures, managing work or in doing policy consultancy work for the leaders of organizations and institutions in ethnic minority areas. She found that Kinh students have the ability of considering issues on a broad scope, meanwhile ethnic minority students tend to look more at details.

When I ask her if the criteria for working and living in ethnic minority areas is being professionally qualified, being enthusiastic and having wholehearted commitment to ethnic minority cultures, did she think that qualified Kinh students could replace ethnic minority students in ethnic minority communities? She responded:

> Theoretically, replacement is completely ordinary because at any place the competence of human resources is still the most important consideration--not distinguishing if staff are ethnic minority persons or not. The most important thing is how staff deal with and solve problems. If Kinh staff

have enthusiasm, wholeheartedness and good professional knowledge and skills, then it is not necessary to discuss the issue of replacement, because we need qualified staff to do the work. However, in reality, ethnic minority people still feel more open to staff who are ethnic minorities.

I asked her to explain to me the reasons why ethnic minority staff are often more welcome than Kinh staff by ethnic minority people. She explained that when ethnic minority staff work in ethnic minority areas, ethnic minority communities' members do not have a feeling that the staff try to canvass them for ideas, but talk to them or to help them organize activities that are helpful for their communities. When Kinh staff work in ethnic minority areas, at the beginning, ethnic minority people often find a distance between them and the staff. They may think that the Kinh staff try to persuade them to participate in some programs or activities for Kinh people.

Beliefs about Appropriate Pedagogy

I asked a set of questions to explore how the above visions of ethnic minority students affect the teaching practices of these professors. In general, professors adjust their teaching methods when they teach ethnic minority students. The most prominent adjustments are slowing down their teaching, giving detailed explanation of particular concepts, maximizing the use of images and creating a cordial learning atmosphere. Others maintain a reform of the entire BA curriculum is desirable.

Professor Tran said, "Professors should teach ethnic minority students more slowly, and give clearer explanations." She gave an example of the English course which she asserted does not work if professors try to cram students with knowledge. Students who have never had the chance to study any foreign languages before cannot acquire a lot of knowledge in a short time. She also mentioned about the teaching methods that should be applied to professional courses. She said, "professors should give more details in their

lectures, give exercises for students and correct exercises for students more carefully." She illustrated with a course introducing students to the activity of building a cultural village. According to her, students should be taught specifically each step of designing a project related to this activity: from the initial step of propagandizing to the step of establishing a management board and the final steps of building the village.

According to Professor Dang, teaching methods applied to ethnic minority students is different from the one applied to majority students. He pointed out three main things that professors should keep in their mind when they teach ethnic minority students: (1) teach in detail about certain concepts, especially academic concepts; (2) try to give examples that are relevant to the living environment of ethnic minority students; and (3) pay attention to students' ways of thinking. For the third point, he gave an example to show why "ways of thinking" should be considered. He said:

> For example, in Vietnamese we have only one word for "cage." However, in ethnic minority languages in the Northeast of Vietnam, there are many different words for cage depending on each particular kind of animal. This is an expression of thinking science. We do not evaluate that this ethnic group is better than another one; we can only consider that this ethnic group is different from that one.

Sharing a similar viewpoint with Professor Dang, Professor Trinh said:

> It is necessary to give lectures to ethnic minority students in the simplest way. During the lectures, academic concepts have to be simplified. It is not easy to do so, but at least we need to be aware of this way of giving lectures to ethnic minority students.

Professor Trinh also mentioned the importance of equipment to support teaching and learning. He shared one of the teaching techniques that he likes to use. He said:

> It is important to have audio-visual equipment to support teaching. Several years ago, I used videotaped activities on the lives of ethnic minority groups, where I conducted my fieldwork. Through these videostapes students could see images, and I could analyze these for them to understand these activities of ethnic minority people.

He wished that the Department would have their own classrooms in which students could watch documentary films that he made in his different fieldwork sessions. He disappointedly said that:

> Sometimes, when I go on business abroad, I think that it is very important to bring some useful information and experiences to students back home. Making films during my different fieldwork sessions is making film through the professional eyes (researchers), not through the eyes of a correspondent. However, I sometimes feel discouraged because I cannot put my enthusiasm and passion into practice due to the shortage of learning and teaching resources[14].

With the same viewpoint about the adjustment of teaching methods when applied to ethnic minority students, professor Pham asserted that, "it is certain that the teaching methods applied to ethnic minority students must be different from the one applied to majority students." According to her, for ethnic minority students, it is necessary to give an detailed explanation of all concepts. She also emphasized the effectiveness of using images in the lectures given to ethnic minority students. In her opinion, vivid visuals will help students to comprehend knowledge more easily. I asked her to give me an example of her using images and an instance that she thought she should explain detailed knowledge for students in her lectures to ethnic minority students. She said, for example, "when teaching about different forms of folklore arts, we can show students videotapes of these arts." In general, Professor Pham always tries to maximize the use of images which she finds that can make students feel more interested in during their learning. In her course "Documents of Government's Governance," professor Pham thought that the most essential thing was to instruct students with examples. After that, students had to practice by themselves and she

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[14] The Department does not have a computer projector, however, through my observation of professor Trinh's lecture, I noticed that he brought his computer projector to the university to show films that he documented during his fieldwork to give lectures to students.

would correct them. She elaborated, "for example, students have to understand that in a specific case they have to submit a certain kind of document and they also have to understand what the document submitted means." She reported that usually she gives students a sample, and then gives students some specific cases, for example, a document to ask for permission to build a cultural house. Students then understand what kind of document to submit, and whom to submit it to for permission to build a cultural house. She found that these details are important when teaching ethnic minority students. Summing up, she said, "it is not necessary to lecture a lot about theory but just show them something very specific and detailed."

Looking at another perspective in teaching methods to ethnic minority students, Professor Dinh stated that in the classroom, students often come from different ethnic groups, including Kinh students. Therefore, he thought that students' relationship in the class is important for their learning environment:

> It is necessary to make students cordial with each other. During the teaching process, we should not distinguish, for example, that this ethnic group of students understand lessons worse than the other ones, but we have to understand all students. For students who are slow in comprehending the lessons, we should ask them more often and to encourage them to show their viewpoints. This can help students understand the lessons better.

Besides giving lectures, he said that he often organizes seminars for students. He thought that seminars give his students opportunities to raise questions and solve problems in their studies. He also appreciated the role of a storytelling technique that he used with ethnic minority students:

> We can encourage student to tell the stories of their ethnic minority groups. After that we can, for example, either retell with more details or explain some meanings of the stories that students have just told. This will make the relationship between the professor and students closer, and also students find that the professor understands about their cultures and they feel encouraged in their studies.

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Sharing the experience he learned from his visits to other countries, Professor Trinh expressed his wish that the Minister of Education and Training that Vietnam could have an Ethnic Minority Institute to train only ethnic minority students. He thought that at the moment, the educational model is the model for the lowlands. The curriculum, time and infrastructure are not appropriate for ethnic minority students. He was worried that if Vietnam keeps this educational model, ethnic minority children will be at a disadvantage for all their life. He stated that "curriculum cannot be the same as for students in the lowlands; we need to design separate curricula for ethnic minority students" because "the current programs cannot unearth and encourage students' talents."

Summary

Professors' visions for ethnic minority students were diverse. Ethnic minority students were envisioned as a group of disadvantaged students who have limited ability of knowledge acquisition mostly because of poor educational or social conditions. As for students' future careers, professors' most common vision for ethnic minority students was to become cultural staff who will work in the field of organizing and conducting cultural activities. Professors in the program also envisioned ethnic minority students as policy consultants, Masters of Ceremonies, and "seeds" planted in the community, but also as replaceable staff. In general, professors' imagined communities for ethnic minority students were influenced by their preconception about students' studying ability and their evaluation of students' positions in their communities. These visions also affected the teaching methods that they used with ethnic minority students. Professors found that it was necessary to include more practical knowledge for students, to adjust their teaching methods when they taught

ethnic minority students, and, for some, to develop a new curriculum specifically for ethnic

minority students.

CHAPTER SEVEN: COMMUNITIES ENVISIONED BY STUDENTS

This chapter details the communities of belonging and identity imagined by ethnic minority students themselves. Within a learning community surrounded by majority Kinh students, ethnic minority students contested official images found in national policy documents, and offered an alternative vision of their identities as students in the BA program and as future staff in the field of cultural management. In doing so, they also provided advice for reform of the program. Basic information on students' backgrounds was introduced in Chapter Four: Methods. However, as context for the findings which follow, I begin this chapter with a more detailed profile of students participating in the study.

Student Profiles

Chi is a fourth year student. She wanted to study in the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, but did not pass the national university entrance examination. After this, she was chosen to study at the Hanoi University of Culture under the policy of selecting and appointing students. Before being chosen to study at the Hanoi University of Culture, Chi had never thought that she would study there. However, when she was chosen to attend the Department of Ethnic Minority Cultures, she decided to attend the program because she believed that being an ethnic minority person could be one of her strengths for a future career as a staff working in the ethnic minority culture field. At the Hanoi University of Culture, Chi is not only a good student, she has also participated in many extra curricular activities; for example, she attended musical performances in the Department and the university. Chi obtained a Vừ A Dính Scholarship in 2005.[15]

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[15] A scholarship for ethnic minority students who have good study results. It was established on March 5, 1999 and took the name of a Mong ethnic teenager hero. The scholarship aims to foster and develop young human resources for mountainous and ethnic minority areas.

Like Chi, Lan failed the national university entrance exam for the Law University. After that she decided to apply to the Hanoi University of Culture under the policy of selecting and appointing students. She wanted to study in the BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures because she had a chance to meet students in the program who went to her ethnic minority group to do their fieldwork, and she found this work interesting. Lan is a good student and she also obtained Vừ A Dính scholarship last year.

When Khoi was a high school student, he studied at an Ethnic Minority Boarding School in his province. Because of his good marks at the school, he was chosen to apply to study at the university level under the policy of selecting and appointing students. Khoi likes studying foreign languages, and when he was a high school student, he studied English. Therefore, he wanted to become a teacher of English. Khoi applied to the College of Foreign Languages – Vietnam National University, Hanoi but he was not chosen. Instead, he was chosen to study in the Department of Ethnic Minority Cultures at the Hanoi University of Culture. At the Hanoi University of Culture, Khoi is vice secretary of his class and is one of the key students who are responsible for organizing extracurricular activities in his class. Khoi has actively participated in many activities in the Department and in the university. He is also interested in participating in many competitions to explore knowledge on culture and history. He obtained a Vừ A Dính scholarship and is applying to be a member of the Vietnamese Communist Party.

Hang attended the BA program in Ethnic Minority Culture at the Hanoi University of Culture under the policy of selecting and appointing students. Hang did not at first choose to study here. Like Khoi, Hang took the national university entrance examination with the hope that she could be accepted to study at the College of Foreign Languages – Vietnam National

University, Hanoi. However, she failed the examination. After that she was chosen to study at the Hanoi University of Culture. At the beginning Hang did not want to attend the BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures because she wanted to study foreign languages. However, because of family circumstances she decided to attend this program. Her parents encouraged her to go because students who study under this policy will be offered preferential policy regarding tuition fees and accommodations.

Also because of family circumstances, Gia decided to study at the Hanoi University of Culture. His father used to work as a forest ranger and was killed when he was performing his duty. Gia really wanted to study forestry to succeed his father but he failed the national university entrance exam. He decided to study in the BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures under the policy of selecting and appointing students because after his father's death, his family faced many financial difficulties. He attended the program with the hope that he would obtain preferential treatment concerning finances.

Thu likes art and she intended to study at an Art College in her province. However, she does not want to study performance arts, but wants to become a music teacher. Her mother is a teacher and Thu has had the chance to witness her mother's relationship with her students. She would like such relationships in which teachers are highly respected. Thu wanted to succeed her mother, but she failed in the national university entrance examination for the Department of Training Teachers of Music at one of the colleges in her province. After that she was chosen to study at the Hanoi University of Culture under the policy of selecting and appointing students. She obtained Vừ A Dính scholarship last year.

Mai and Nga are Kinh students. They were selected to attend the Hanoi University of Culture under the policy of selecting and appointing students like the ethnic minority

students because they live in severely underdeveloped social and economic areas. Like other students, at the beginning, Mai and Nga did not want to study at the Hanoi University of Culture. They both wanted to become teachers, but they were not successful in the national university entrance examination.

Phuong and Trung are the only two among the ten students whom I interviewed whose first wish was to study at the Hanoi University of Culture when applying to the university level. Previously, Phuong wanted to study economics. However, when she was in her last years of high school, Phuong changed her mind and wanted to study in the Department of Culture Management at the Hanoi University of Culture. Unfortunately, she also failed the national university entrance examination. After that she applied to study at the Hanoi University of Culture under the policy of selecting and appointing students and was chosen to study in the Department of Ethnic Minority Cultures. She also obtained a Vừ A Dính Scholarship last year. Like Phuong, Trung failed the national university entrance examination to study at the Hanoi University of Culture. He intended to try this examination one more time. However, while he was staying at home to prepare for the examination, Trung participated in many social activities in his province. After that he was chosen to study at the Hanoi University of Culture under the policy of selecting and appointing students. He is the student representative of his class and participates in many extracurricular activities in the Department as well as the university.

The students who participated in my research shared with me their learning experiences at the Hanoi University of Culture and their perception of the value of their education and the role of their ethnic systems of values in influencing their attitudes towards education. They also expressed their visions for their future careers, and their place in the

Vietnamese nation and in their respective indigenous communities. In this section I will focus on reporting their imagined identities within a learning community surrounded by Kinh students and their visions for the future.

Identities within a Learning Community Surrounded by Kinh Students

The participants shared with me their visions for themselves through their perceptions of teaching methods; knowledge that they have learned compared with their experiences in reality; and their social relationship within a community surrounded mostly by Kinh people with diverse feelings, thoughts and experiences. However, in the following section, I will focus only on analyzing their perception of teaching methods which showed me their visions of how they would prefer to be seen within a learning community surrounded by Kinh students.

Students have different ideas about teaching methods in the Department. Most of them do not find it productive or appropriate. A few of them find it reasonable but still think there is much room for improvement. In general, students expected a teaching methods which would bring more opportunities for their voices to be heard; will enable students' creativeness and initiative; and not impose inappropriate demand on students.

We are not High School Students

Many students described the teaching methods that professors applied to them as the so called "methods applied to high school students." Such a methods can be seen, for example, in that professors read very slowly with the intention that students should write down every single word that they say. This contrasts with teaching methods applied to regular students, where lectures cover more material, are more fluid, and students are expected to write down notes based just on what they understand. According to Student

Trung, it would be better if professors provided students with materials to read before going to class so that students could have the chance to discuss it in the class. He complained that most of the time professors just lecture, and there is no time for discussion. He thought that it was not necessary for professors to read everything, some unimportant things just need to be explained briefly. He believed that spending all of the class time for professors to read and students to write down what professors read is time wasting and unproductive. He said that for some courses students have only one final class period for "questions and answers" for the whole term and he thought that this was not enough. He prefers more discussion in the class and he also stated, "we have studied Vietnamese since we were in kindergarten, so we do not have any difficulties in understanding Vietnamese language."

Like Trung, Hang confirmed that the typical teaching methods in the Department of many professors is their reading out loud of lectures and students writing down exactly what is read. She likewise recognized that some professors gave lectures to students in the Department as slowly as teaching high school students. According to her, such a slow speed of teaching is only suitable to students who are not fluent in Vietnamese. Actively participating students do not like such methods because it makes their thinking become slower. She suggested that the Department can always either check students' high school files or give a test to check students' level of knowledge acquisition in order to choose the most appropriate teaching methods.

Sharing similar experiences and ideas, Thu stated that in general most of the professors are enthusiastic, however, there are some professors who just keep talking and talking, and wanted students just to write down what they say. According to her, such one-way teaching methods without conversation between professors and students makes students

very bored and wait for the class to end. She found that this teaching practice prevents students from being creative and it does not help enhance students' competence. Like Trung, Thu said that professors should teach only the basics of a topic because it is more important to offer students the opportunity to raise their voice and study by themselves. Other students like Gia, Mai and Nga shared these views. Gia explained that because students try to write down all of what the professors say, they have no chance to comprehend the lecture or ask questions because they have to focus on listening and writing. Sometimes they try to discuss topics with professors during the break time, but it is evident that reserved students rarely do this.

According to Nga, professors should alternate teaching techniques because not all students can concentrate from the beginning to the end of the class to listen to professors lecturing and write down what professors speak. She said that besides the above typical teaching methods, some professors also apply other techniques in which she find interesting. For instance, in some classes, professors give students a chance for discussion at the end of the class, or show students documentary films, or take students to museums to observe ethnic minority artifacts.

We do not All Study Badly

Hang was a student who expressed a very critical idea of the current teaching methods used with ethnic minority students in the Department. She believed that the teaching methods in which professors read and students write down what professors say was counterproductive to students. Hang said that she prefers the teaching which professors use with regular students (students who sit in national university entrance exam, most of whom are Kinh). She mentioned the preconception of ethnic minority students' lack of competence

that influences professors teaching methods. In Hang's opinion, teaching methods should be flexible and it is not a good idea to make the assumption that ethnic minority students study badly, so that professors believe they have to read for them to write down whatever professors say. Hang suggested that professors should apply the same teaching methods (professors give lectures and students take note based on their understanding) to both regular and appointed students.

Sharing similar ideas with Hang, Lan affirmed that professors in the Department, especially full time professors, do slow down their speed of teaching when they teach ethnic minority students. As far as Lan knows, the Department also reminds sessional teachers to teach more slowly and give more details to ethnic minority students. However, Lan said that sometimes the Department emphasizes too much on ethnic minority students' weak points in studying, so many professors give lectures too slowly. Echoing other students, Lan said, "we have learned Vietnamese since we were little kids, therefore, teaching speed in universities is completely fine to us, not too fast." Lan then told me an example of a teaching methods applied by a professor in the Department, which she found very interesting and productive. She told me that the professor often points out the frame of each topic for the next class and lets students explore the topic by themselves, after that she will give a lecture on this topic, discuss it and give comments on students' ideas. Lan confirmed that "in the class, if students get used to this teaching method, they will find it very effective. Some other professors of other courses just lecture and student sometimes cannot understand."

We don't Like to be Shouted at

Looking at another aspect of teaching, when professors move too fast, Gia pointed out that, in general, professors who teach introductory courses "often impose their teaching

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methods on students. Sometimes we cannot catch up with classes." He gave the example that many of his classmates had never had the chance to study English, therefore, it is very difficult for them to function in English; meanwhile, the professors are often very demanding. Sometimes when some of them have no answers for some questions, they are shouted at by the professors. With emotion, Gia said, "I find this not reasonable because though we have tried our best to study, [English] is still a very difficult course for people who have never had the chance to study it. Gia disappointedly said that some students were even shouted by professors at exam time, which he thought was the most tense time for students. In his view, professors should have created a relaxing atmosphere so that students could do their best on the exams instead of shouting at them and making them really stressed out:

> There are some students who are often shouted by professors in the class and when they take a test if they do not know or understand anything they are shouted by professors again. This makes students really feel psychologically stressed…. When we are shouted by professors because we do not understand or know some words, we feel like we are despised. We often feel stressed about this and this discourages us a lot in study.

Gia added that with dancing courses, professors are also often very demanding. According to Gia, dancing courses require students to have aptitude for dance, but not all students have an "inborn" aptitude for it. However, professors often demand that students who do not have an aptitude for dance catch up with those who do. He said, "if we do not know how to dance, we are often shouted at with mean words." According to Gia, professors should teach dance slowly because "we do not know how to dance so we have to study it. And it takes time to learn how to dance. Students cannot know how to dance in just a short time." When I asked him what if anything that he wanted to change in teaching methods in the Department, he responded, "I wish that professors could be more enthusiastic and they

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should be more considerate and more warmhearted, especially the professors who teach introductory courses."

Imagined Identities for the Future

Students' future plans were mostly about their future careers, their wishes for the places they would work as well as their wishes for further study. Students' visions for their future could be divided into two basic communities: Local and national imagined communities. Most of them envisioned themselves going back to their native lands and working for their communities; two of them thought that they would stay and work in Hanoi if they could find a job; and two of them thought that Hanoi would be an ideal place for them to stay and work in general. Among ten students, including the two Kinh students who also attended the program under the "policy of selecting and appointing students," five students envisioned themselves as researchers on ethnic minority cultures, mostly on their own ethnic minority cultures. The exception was a Kinh student who wished to study and write about Kinh culture. Two students envisioned themselves as organizers and holders of cultural activities; one student envisioned herself as a consultant for those in the ethnic minority cultures field; one student envisioned herself working in the culture management field; and one student was still not sure of what he would exactly do in the field of ethnic minority cultures after his graduation. Most of students planned to work after their graduation, but some of them also planned to study further either right after finishing their undergraduate degree or after working for a while.

Many students envisioned themselves as serving their communities. However, their ideas of what could be considered serving communities were diverse. Some thought that serving their communities meant they will return to their ethnic communities and work there,

but some other considered physical places are not important because according to them wherever they work, but if they serve in ethnic minority cultures field, it means that they are serving their ethnic communities.

Returning Home to Serve our Communities

Some students had very decisive ideas of returning to their home and working to serve their communities. Their reasons for returning to their native lands were diverse: more opportunities back home to apply what they had learned, more opportunities to be guaranteed a job, their attachment to their native lands, their responsibility for the cultures of their ethnic groups, and their comfortable feelings of working in a familiar environment.

More opportunities. One of the most common reasons for students to go back was that they will have more opportunities to apply what they have learned than working in Hanoi, and it would be easier for them to find a job. Students that mentioned this were Chi, Gia and Phuong. Chi and Phuong are fourth year students and just came back from their fieldwork in mountainous areas. They both recognized from their fieldwork that it would be better for them to go back to their communities and work to apply what they have learned. During her fieldwork, Chi designed two music programs for ethnic minority people in the area. She liked being an organizer and holder of cultural activities. After the fieldwork in a cultural organization in an ethnic minority area in the North, Chi was promised a position after she finished her degree. She thought herself very lucky because as far as she knew, although students who are selected and appointed by the local governments to study at universities are supposed to be offered jobs after graduation; in reality, they often have to wait, sometimes for a long time to get a job. According to Chi, ethnic minority areas are short of staff, especially staff with a Bachelor's degree; on the other hand, organizations and

institutions in ethnic minority areas may not have enough work for them to do. Chi said that she would accept the offer from the organization where she did her fieldwork because her long-term plan was to study further. Chi hoped that after around two years of work, she would be appointed by her working place to study further and they would pay 50% of the fees for her study. Chi found it an economic and effective way for her because her parents, with five children, would not be able to support fees for her further study right after she finishes her undergraduate degree.

In the past, Phuong wanted to study in a completely different field – economics. At that time she thought that she wanted to work in the economics because she believed that a job in this field would bring her higher income and a better life. However, since she studied ethnic minority cultures, her thinking about jobs and life has changed a lot. In her thesis, she wrote about introducing *Gong* culture to a wider audience. She also wanted to conduct more research related to her Muong ethnic group. She wished that she would find a job in ethnic minority cultures in her native land: "It will be easier. I will be able to apply more of what I have learned from the program if I work in my commune. Also, I think that I will take more initiative when I work back home." She concluded that only if she could not find any job in her native land would she think of looking for a job in other places.

One of Gia's reasons for coming back to his native land to work was similar to Chi and Phuong – more opportunities to apply what he has learned from the program:

> I want to work in my commune. I find that because I study ethnic minority cultures, I should go home and work. Back home I have more chances to apply what I have learned here than in Hanoi. Moreover, the opportunity to get a job in Hanoi is fragile, only if you are lucky you can get a job here.

Working in a familiar environment and family ties. Besides the reason of having more opportunities to apply what they have learned when coming back home and work, some students chose to go back because they preferred working in a familiar environment and living close to their families. Nga – a Kinh student who attended the program under the "policy of selecting and appointing students," envisioned herself working in the cultural management field after graduation. She noted that students who are selected and appointed by the local government to study in universities will be offered a job after graduation. Kinh students like her who have their family registered in ethnic minority areas for five years or more could be also eligible under this policy. Nga said that if she is offered a job in Hanoi she will have to consider many factors. However, she still prefers returning to her local provinces to work because:

> Working in my home provinces means working in a familiar environment which I have got used to since I was a little kid. I believe that it will be easier for me to work in a familiar environment. Also, I will have the opportunity to live close to my family. All of my family members, my parents, my brothers and sisters are now living there, they are also the reason that I want to go home and work.

Coming from the Thai ethnic group, Thu did not find it comfortable to live in a crowded and unfamiliar place like Hanoi. She confirmed that: "even if I am offered a job in Hanoi, I still want to return to my home land to work because I do not want to stay and work in a place which I find unfamiliar." Thu has been interested in art since she was a little girl, she therefore envisioned herself as an organizer and holder of cultural activities, a position which she believed will bring her the chance to do art activities.

Gia also cited his family ties as one of the reasons that he wants to go back home. He sadly told me about his family circumstance, as noted above. His father used to work as a forest ranger and was killed when he was patrolling the forest. Gia still has three other

younger siblings and he felt that he must share the family responsibility for taking care of his younger siblings with his widowed mother.

Attachment and loyalty to native lands. Some students showed very strong attachment and responsibility for the cultures of their native lands. It is logical to find that students who showed a strong connection to their communities also made reference to their ethnic system of values in influencing their attitudes towards education as well as their choice of future career and working place. Gia not only mentioned his wish to go back home to work and serve his community, but also spoke very happily and proudly about the expectation of his native land for people like him to go back and work:

> I want to study more and better so that I can apply all I have learned from university to the reality in my community. My native land is also expecting a person with a bachelor's degree in culture like me to come back because in my native land there has not been any Bachelor's in ethnic minority cultures yet.

When I asked him about the status of the culture in his ethnic group, he spoke very excitedly about his Thai culture. He said that he likes studying ethnic minority cultures because he finds that there are still a lot of interesting and distinctive things in ethnic minority cultures that we can use, preserve and enhance. He mentioned his Thai ethnic group as an example. He told me stories about how he witnessed many religious rituals of the Thai ethnic group conducted by Shaman to cure people. He stated that it is not superstitious as many people think, not all Shamans take unfair advantages of their jobs, and that many of them have their own indigenous knowledge to cure people. In fact, Gia's grandfather used to be a Shaman and Gia hoped that he would be able to write about the traditions and rituals that his grandfather taught him and also about other rituals that he witnessed. He emphasized that

Thai culture is diverse and that there are so many interesting things about Thai culture.

However, he could not help expressing his worries about the risk of losing this culture:

> With the import of cultures from other areas and countries, in the intersection between Thai culture and other cultures, I am afraid that the distinctiveness of Thai culture will disappear. I do not know if and how I can help to use, preserve and enhance my Thai culture, but still I have a sense of being responsible for doing this.

Gia also appreciated his education in helping him recognize the importance of his

ethnic culture and his responsibility for it: "when I attend this program I feel guilty, I feel that

I haven't fulfilled my responsibility." Gia envisioned himself as a researcher who would

write about different aspects of his unique and diverse Thai culture:

> My objective is that after graduating from the program, I want to work as cultural staff in my native land. If I cannot dance and sing in order to actually design an art or music activity, I can always write about religious culture, music programs and cultural activities of the Thai ethnic people. I can also write about economic activities of Thai ethnic people, about their daily life. There are many things that I can write about.

Although Trung was not sure of what he exactly would do as a researcher or an

organizer of cultural activities after his graduation, he is certain of working in the ethnic

minority cultures field in his native land: "I find myself attached to my native land and I

really want to make a contribution to it." He affirmed that he would go back to his home

province to work, though the conditions in Hanoi may be better. However, he then explained

that he attended the university under the policy of selecting and appointing students, so he is

in fact not allowed to go to other provinces after his graduation. According to him, it should

not be compulsory for students who attend university programs under this policy to return to

their provinces to work. But, he then emphasized his determination to go back to his native

land to work: "If I have a choice for my workplace, I still think that I will return to my

province because no place can be compared with one's native land."

Sharing similar attachment and passion to contribute efforts to serve people in her native land, Thu showed strong emotion when she mentioned one of the reasons that make her want to go back to her native land:

> You know, it is my native land. I was born there and grew up in my native land. I love my native land a lot and I really want to contribute my knowledge to serve my community. I hope that I will find a job in my native land after I graduate and if it is possible I wish that I could go further with my study so that I can have more opportunities to study about my native culture.

Serving the Community in Different Ways

Also having a passion for serving her community, Lan, a Phu La ethnic student, had a different idea about what could be considered serving community's members. Lan used to question herself when thinking of where to work after her graduation. She thought if other people could stay in Hanoi and work, why not her? But now she confirmed that she would definitely work in the field of ethnic minority culture after finishing her degree. She recognized that majoring in ethnic minority cultures is different from other students' majors who stayed in Hanoi and worked. She found that her major is aimed at serving her ethnic community. On the one hand, she envisioned herself going back her native land to work:

> I am myself an ethnic minority person, so why shouldn't I go back and serve my community's members? Therefore, I think that I will try my best to study so that I can go back to my community to conduct research related to my community and preserve and enhance the distinctiveness of the culture of my ethnic group.

On the other hand, she also expressed her wish to stay and work in Hanoi if she could find a job in the ethnic minority cultures field. Her idea was that serving ethnic communities does not necessary mean having to return: "serving here in Hanoi, but in the field of ethnic minority cultures is equal to serving my community members."

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Lan is interested in writing about ethnic minority culture and envisioned herself working as researcher in the future who could conduct research and write about her native culture:

> I noticed that many students who studied in this program before me wrote a lot about ethnic minority cultures. I wish that I could have competence to write about ethnic minority cultures like them. I especially wish that I myself could write about the culture of my ethnic group – the Phu La ethnic group, so that people could know more about the culture of my ethnic group and find ways to preserve my culture

She happily told me about an award she received for her research paper on wedding customs of the Phu La ethnic group when she was a third year student. She was very happy with this award and considered it a strong motivator for her plan to write more about her culture in the future. She also wished that she could have enough resources to go further with a Master's degree. She thought that in order to conduct research and write about ethnic minority cultures, it would be necessary for her to study further.

Any Good Place can be a Destination

While most of the students whom I interviewed visualized themselves as locally attached, some other students envisioned themselves on a national level. To them, any good place within the Vietnamese nation could be a life destination--though it did not mean that they did not love their ethnic groups or vice versa; they made a clear distinction between their inside attachment to their ethnic community and what thought was best for them personally.

Having similar education background, Hang and Khoi's first choice was to study foreign languages; however, because Hang failed the national university entrance exam, she decided to accept her appointment to the Hanoi University of Culture. Khoi applied to the College of Foreign Languages, Vietnam National University (VNU) under the policy of

selecting and appointing students, but he was not selected to study at VNU; instead, he was appointed to study Ethnic Minority Cultures at the Hanoi University of Culture. Although ethnic minority cultures was not their first choice, Hang and Khoi both showed their interest in ethnic minority cultures during their interviews with me. Like many other students when talking about future plans, these two students above all visualized themselves returning to their native lands and working. However, when we discussed the possibility of staying in Hanoi, they both clearly expressed their excitement and interest in staying and working there. They explained their preference for Hanoi as "any good place could be their life destination."

Hang appreciated the ethnic minority cultures major. She found it a new and interesting major and thought that she would really regret it if she could not find a job relevant to what she had learned. She envisioned herself first as a consultant for a cultural office in her province. She admitted that she was not good at either singing or dancing, so she did not see herself as suitable in the role of an organizer of cultural activities. She mentioned the possibility of trying other work if she could not find a relevant job back home after her graduation. I asked her what type of job and where she would like to work. Her immediate answer for the destination was Hanoi – "I think I will stay in Hanoi for a while," but she was not sure of what she would do. When I asked her if she would stay for good, she said:

> It would be ideal if I am offered a job in ethnic minority cultures field. If I can find a good job in Hanoi I think I will stay in Hanoi and work. Of course, if I can get a job in my province it is good already, but I prefer living and working in Hanoi.

When I asked her about the situation if the job offered were not related to her field of study, she hesitantly thought that at that time she would have to consider many other issues and also ask for her parents' opinions. However, it seemed she preferred staying and working in Hanoi since it has better and more convenient working and living environments. Although

she did not mention any other provinces as her choice for destination besides Hanoi, she did emphasize that "I think that wherever is good I will stay there."

Like Hang, at the beginning, Khoi also envisioned himself returning to his native land and working there. Khoi showed more attachment and enthusiasm to his native land than Hang. He was worried about the risk of losing the Xinh Mun language. He said that his native language is being replaced by the Thai language. As he understood it, the language assimilation in the Xinh Mun group is caused by the fact that the Xinh Mun ethnic group live alternately with the Thai community – which is a very big community in Son La province. For cultural and economic exchanges, people most often use Thai. Inside houses, Xinh Mun people speak Xinh Mun, but when they go out there are too many Thai people outside, so they have to use Thai to have conversations. Therefore, Xinh Mun people are gradually losing their mother tongue. He visualized himself as a researcher on ethnic minority cultures. He wished that he could conduct research on ethnic minority cultures of different groups in Son La, especially on his native culture – Xinh Mun. He wanted to study more about the policies on ethnic minority cultures so that he could find appropriate policies applied for each particular group. He understood that preserving the Xinh Mun culture is a very difficult task but he still hoped that with good knowledge, after graduation, he could disseminate knowledge to his community so that Xinh Mun people could save their native language. He believed that losing native language meant losing native culture.

However, at end of the conversation with me about his future plan, Khoi also shared with me his desire to stay and work in Hanoi:

> Staying and working in Hanoi is also my aspiration because Hanoi is a big social and cultural centre. Working in Hanoi will bring me the chance to learn and exchange working and living experience with many people. I

really want to stay and work in Hanoi, but I think that it is impossible for
me to have a chance to stay and work here.

Khoi thought that working in his native land he would have more opportunities to work in
ethnic minority cultures field and more opportunity to directly approach ethnic minority
people. According to him, these contacts would help his career in ethnic minority cultures.
However, he finally confirmed that "if I can find a job in Hanoi, I think I will stay and work
here."

Returning to the Kinh Community

Mai is a majority Kinh student who attended the program under the policy of
selecting and appointing students to universities to study. At the beginning, Mai seemed
reserved and reticent. But gradually, she became more and more open. In the first interview
session, when we talked about her future plan, she was not sure of what exactly she would do
after graduation:

I still cannot imagine exactly what kinds of tasks I will be in charge of in
the future. Probably I will work for an office of ethnic minority cultures in
my local province. I will probably be in charge of propagandizing the
Government's policies to ethnic minority people, and I will go to ethnic
minority areas to understand more about ethnic minority cultures.

When I asked her if she thought that she would choose ethnic minority cultures as her long–
term career, she responded that so far she thought that she would, but she did not know what
would happen in one more year (Mai is in her third year). In the second interview session,
Mai told me that she visualized herself working as researcher and she also asserted that if she
could get a job in Hanoi, she would stay and work in Hanoi. I wanted Mai to tell me the
reasons why she was not sure if she would adhere to ethnic minority cultures areas. She said:

I am not sure if I will change my mind or not in one year (when I
graduate) because of the influence of immediate benefits. If I can find a
job in Hanoi, I think that I need to consider my career and my workplace.

That is the reason why I am not sure yet if I will adhere to ethnic minority cultures for a long time.

Mai added that she wished she could have the chance to study more about her culture. I asked, "Which culture?" - "Kinh culture"- she responded. I was wondering why her major was in ethnic minority cultures, even though she wanted to study more about Kinh culture. She explained:

> I believe each culture has its own characteristics. I find that nowadays we say a lot about ethnic minority cultures, but not about Kinh ethnic culture and customs. As a Kinh person, I want to understand more and study more about my own culture.

Summary

Students in the BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures, both minority and majority, wanted to be viewed and treated in the same manner as the majority students in terms of their academic abilities. In this, they contested official images of themselves, as well as those of professors. They offered an alternative image of their identities as students in the program and as future staff in the field of cultural management. Most wished to return home and serve their local communities, they had a loyalty to their native lands, and some hoped to work on preserving their own languages and culture. Others wanted to find jobs in ethnic minority culture in major cities such as Hanoi, and argued that they could serve their communities in this way as well. In contrast to professors' views, students envisioned themselves working both as organizers and researchers of cultural activities. Above all, it was clear that students' visions for their future plans had a close connection with their identity as members of ethnic minority groups and with their homes communities.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study show that imagined communities envisioned for ethnic minority students by the government, professors and students themselves are diverse and contested. This chapter summarizes the major findings of the study and discusses the contestation of control over power relations, knowledge and identity which are expressed through multifaceted imagined communities of higher education for ethnic minority students in Vietnam.

Summary of Study Findings

Government policy envisioned ethnic minority students as both belonging to the Vietnamese nation and to their local communities. They were first envisioned as a group of disadvantaged members who need special help, and second, as Vietnamese-speaking students in educational institutions. Within their local communities, they were considered elite minorities and key human resources. They were expected to be loyal to national ideology in order to propagandize the government's policies to ethnic minority people. At the same time, they were also expected to adhere to the communities where they work to contribute to the preservation and enhancement of ethnic minority cultures.

Professors envisioned ethnic minority students as a group of disadvantaged students who had limited ability in knowledge acquisition mostly because of poor educational or social conditions. For future careers, professors most commonly saw students as cultural staff, rather than researchers, working in the field of organizing and conducting cultural activities. Professors in the program also envisioned ethnic minority students as policy consultants, Masters of Ceremonies, and "seeds" planted in the community, but also as replaceable staff. These images affected the teaching methods that professors used with

ethnic minority students. They believed it was necessary to include more practical knowledge for students, to slow down and otherwise modify their teaching methods when they taught ethnic minority students, and, for some, to develop a new curriculum specifically for ethnic minority students.

Students who are selected and appointed by local governments to attend the BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures, both minority and majority, wanted, in general, to be viewed and taught in the same manner as majority students. In taking this perspective, they contested both official and professors' images of themselves. They provided an alternative image of their identities as students and as staff in cultural management and research. Most were loyal to their home communities, and wanted to return home and serve their local communities. Some hoped to work on preserving their own languages and culture. Others preferred or would accept jobs in major cities such as Hanoi, and believed this also served their communities. Students saw themselves working both as organizers and as researchers in cultural management and preservation.

Contestations of Power

Government Power towards Educational Institutions, Professors and Students

The government's image of ethnic minority students showed how the power of very high levels of policy can have wide effects on different lower levels, proclaiming their hegemony over both institutions and students. Kanno (2003) points out that the vision of educational institutions for their students powerfully influences pedagogical policies and practices. However, I found that in the context of Vietnam, the educational institution's vision does not always have a strong direct effect on the students. Actually, it is the central

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government's policies that powerfully affect the institution and professors which then affect the students.

To begin with, findings from this study show that educational institutions reflect the government's visions for students. This is illustrated in the training objectives of the BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures. The requirement of national ideology is the first requirement that students in this program must meet. Students in the BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures need to have a steadfast standpoint and ideology, a judicious viewpoint, and master the policies of the Communist Party; being completely faithful to the revolutionary work of the Communist Party and the government. This training objective reflects precisely one of the roles that the government envisions for students who will work as cultural staff in ethnic minority areas – to be loyal nationalists. By valuing the Party's ideology so highly, this could be construed as an attempt to control the values of university students and maintain the control and hegemony of the Party and the dominant ethnic group.

In many universities, including the Hanoi University of Culture, the teaching practices do not always reflect the visions of the institutions for their students. Universities must follow the policies of the Ministry of Education and Training, in program structure and content, and cannot really do what they want for their students. For example, professors think that the BA program needs to include more practical and professional knowledge, but in fact the time for practical knowledge in the program is limited by certain higher level regulations for each program. It is interesting to note that here the government and the professors both imagine that students are to become cultural staff in ethnic minority areas, but these two groups disagree about the best way to train the students. There is not a conflict between these two imagined communities, but one between the best ways of preparing students for a

community imagined in common. Thus, students have to focus on national ideology and theory to the detriment of practical knowledge. Practical knowledge is even sacrificed for the maintenance of the current ideological system and hegemony of the ruling Party. This is ironic considering the future role that these students are supposed to play in their communities.

Some of the findings of this study can be partly explained with the notion of imagined communities theorized by previous researchers. Kanno (2003) affirmed that Norton's conceptualization of imagined communities can be applied to educational institutions. One role of educational institutions discussed by Kanno is to reflect society's visions and transmit these onto their students. This argument is true in the case of the Department of Ethnic Minority Cultures. The multi-functional cultural staff training model of the Department originated from the demands of society. The current labour demand in ethnic minority areas is still small. Positions for cultural staff for ethnic minority areas are limited by funding but there is also a demand for competent staff. Ethnic minority areas need staff who know how to conduct different kinds of work (organize and conduct cultural activities and at the same time conduct research) rather than many staff that just specialize in either organizing cultural activities or conducting research. This demand for cultural staff is in fact controlled by the national government, not by the ethnic minority communities themselves. Its policies have created the positions for cultural staff. In this way the government is acting as the "society" described by Kanno (2003), and in essence, is also reaffirming the control of the national government over the cultural practices of ethnic minority groups.

Kanno (2003) points out that the vision educational institutions have for their students powerfully influences pedagogical policies and practices. This theorization of imagined communities is true here in the sense that professors' views of ethnic minority students affected their teaching methods. Professors envisioned ethnic minority students as a group of disadvantaged students who have a limited ability to gain knowledge mostly due to their poor educational or social conditions. Because professors' expectations for students' performance were fairly low, they modified their teaching accordingly, often times slowing down their lectures so that students could write down every word they say. They believed this appropriate to students' abilities. The findings showed that the students were in fact aware of modified teaching methods and did not always agree with them. Students who attended the BA program in Ethnic Minority Cultures under the policy of "selecting and appointing" students, both minority and majority, wanted to be viewed and treated in the same manner as the majority students in terms of their academic abilities – they want to be viewed as just as good. Some students even admitted that such slow and one way teaching methods just made them become slower and more passive. Therefore, there is the expression of counter-hegemony here in terms of students offering an opposing identity to that of the teachers' stereotype. However, the students have not been able to position themselves to change this identity or stereotype. Instead, they have unfortunately been confirming the stereotype based on their performance.

The fact that professors actually altered their teaching methods when they teach ethnic minority students could be perceived as "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977/1990) in the sense that it arbitrarily hurts ethnic minority students, a subordinate group,

without physical force. Professors, in this case, have a preconception that ethnic minority students' competence is often not as good as majority students, and they have made their preconception legitimated in educational settings where they are the people who hold more power than students. The fact that students found they became slower and more passive due to the modified teaching methods could be explained in that these students have experienced "symbolic violence" (professors' preconceptions and modified teaching methods) and over time, they might have perceived their professors' "symbolic violence" as legitimate. As a result, they might misrecognize their competence and think that they are actually slower and worse compared to majority students. Research has shown that instructors' expectations for students can affect students' actual performance in class (e.g., Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968), confirming professors' expectations. Therefore, it is possible that holding low expectations for students may have actually hurt the academic performance of students. In this case, the educational institution has reproduced a subordinate identity.

"Symbolic violence" and almost physical violence was seen more clearly through the fact that some of ethnic minority students had been shouted at by their professors in some courses. These students felt like they were despised, and were stressed and discouraged in their studies. This imposed onto students' minds that they were discriminated against because of their lack of competence and their lower social positions. It is difficult to say if the professors in the BA programs who shouted at ethnic minority students expressed a sense of racial discrimination or not. Because Vietnamese culture was greatly influenced by Confucianism, the relationship between professor and students in Vietnam is very close to the relationship between parents and children in terms of teachers having power to "discipline" their kids in such a way as to make them better. Professors in this case might not

even recognize the side effect of such kind of "discipline" if they never recognize any reaction from the students. In other words, some professors shout at all their students, regardless of their ethnicity or race. However, indirectly, this action can be understood as an additional way in which educational settings reproduce subordinate identities.

Contestations of Knowledge

Similar to the case of Aboriginal education in Canada and New Zealand, certain conceptions of dominant knowledge was assumed as "acceptable or standard knowledge" in the BA program for ethnic minority students. For example, in regard to ethnic minority students' knowledge of foreign languages, a professor mentioned that ethnic minority students do not have much experience with foreign languages (e.g., English). However, in fact, all such students have learned Vietnamese (a foreign language to them) in their early schooling. This means that ethnic minority students are at least bi-lingual, and those who are learning an additional language will become tri-lingual. The professor considered only English as a language foreign to ethnic minority students, but not Vietnamese. In this case, the professor has discounted ethnic minority students' ability to learn foreign languages and has likened them to Vietnamese ethnic students by discounting the fact that they have had to master Vietnamese.

The research findings also showed how knowledge control in educational setting could be part of the broader marginalization of ethnic minority students. One of the professors made a distinction between Kinh students' and ethnic minority students' conception of ethnic minority cultures. She stated that Kinh students' conceptions are objective, systematic and coherent; meanwhile, ethnic minority students' conceptions are detailed, emotional and profound but not really systematic and coherent. She then affirmed

that once students attend this program, both Kinh and ethnic minority students are provided with the same opportunity to gain competence in looking at ethnic minority cultures in a systematic way.

In reality, both groups of students have much knowledge potential: "All men [sic] are potentially intellectuals in the sense of having an intellect and using it, but not all are intellectuals by social function" (Gramsci, 1971, p.3). Gramsci (1971) also divided "intellectuals" into two groups – "traditional" professional intellectuals and "organic" intellectuals. The ethnic minority students in this case have an advantage of knowing their language, culture, and people, and are therefore by nature "organic" intellectuals by the time they enter this program, as opposed to the "traditional" intellectuals trained in formal educational systems by the dominant group. The affirmation of the above professor showed that the indigenous knowledge base of "organic" intellectuals (ethnic minority students) was undervalued by "traditional" professional intellectuals (professors). The professor has used her "social function" in educational settings to control knowledge and orient ethnic minority students into the mainstream knowledge and ways of thinking which she believed to be necessary for ethnic minority students.

Norton (2001) theorizes that an individual's learning is affected not only by the individual's current social participation, but also by their future, imagined affiliations. According to her, learners envision imagined communities for themselves and although they have not participated in such communities yet, they still invest in their learning in ways which will enable them to access the communities that they imagine. From the characteristics of teaching and learning in the Department of Ethnic Minority Cultures at the Hanoi University of Culture, I found this notion is only true in that students in the Department have

to follow a fixed timetable and fixed program. They do not therefore have a choice of courses that they think could develop their own preferences for their future imagined community. Students are not allowed to even choose elective courses; it is the Department which decides what courses to teach. Some students I interviewed, for example, do not have an aptitude for arts performance and imagined themselves working as researchers in the future, but art performance courses are compulsory for them. Students not only find it very difficult to study in these courses, but also it is a waste of time and energy for both students and professors. One may ask, how can students invest in their learning to be helpful and practical for their imagined communities if they do not have opportunities to decide what they think is suitable and helpful for them? Here there appears to be a structural barrier standing in the way of students reaching their desired imagined community. There is also the desire for students to control the elective courses that they can choose – a form of counter-hegemony – but the students also have no good way to go about gaining such power.

Contestations of Identity

Even within government's policy, there were contested imagined communities of students' identities within society. On the one hand, the government expected that students who will work as cultural staff in ethnic minority areas must have enthusiasm for and adhere to ethnic minority groups where they work in order to preserve and develop traditional ethnic minority cultures. On the other hand, these cultural staff are expected to be loyal nationalist to propagandize the government's policies to ethnic minority people, especially the policies on solidarity of the nation. There are two somewhat contradictory policy goals co-existing. The government may want cultural staff to preserve ethnic minority cultures, but at the same

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time, they also want them to serve their political ideology in order to have stable politics in Vietnam.

Concerning this imagined dual role of students envisioned by the government, in general, when the students wished to return to their local communities, they did not often mention anything that contested their possible *role* as cultural staff. Many thought it would be a good idea to return and help their local communities and maintain their culture. This fulfills the local role envisioned by the national government. But, it is not clear if the students also imagine that they have a role to fulfill at the national level. It is possible that students are aware that the government expects them to spread and explain the government's policies in local areas. This is difficult to know since students did not mention this clearly. It would be interesting if this is a government goal that the students are unaware of. This goal may be fulfilled through the political ideology courses embedded in the government-controlled curriculum.

The imagined communities of the government also have an effect on the imagined communities of the students. All of the students who attended the program under the government's policy of "selecting and appointing students" were supposed to return to their ethnic minority groups to work and serve their communities. However, students' imagination for their future workplaces as well as their positions within the Vietnamese nation are diverse. Some of them want to return home and work, others want opportunities in cities and see these as good destinations for the future. Here the government may want to "socially reproduce" students for a role in their local communities.

In the case of the Kinh student who lives in an ethnic minority area and was appointed by the government to attend the university to study Ethnic Minority Cultures, she

recognized that she wants to study and write about her majority Kinh culture after her graduation. In other words, although the government may envision Kinh students who live in ethnic minority areas as belonging to a particular ethnic minority community, and as intending to serve "their" ethnic minority community after study, in fact, these students themselves may envision "geographically" belonging to the ethnic minority community where they physically live, but not being culturally attached to it.

In addition, with regard to students' future careers, besides the vision that students will work as policy consultants and masters of ceremonies, professors mostly envisioned ethnic minority students as more suitable in the roles of organizers and conductors of cultural activities after their graduation. Some of them thought that this was based on the reality in ethnic minority areas which need a lot of staff who know how to organize and conduct cultural activities. Others believed that ethnic minority students are more suitable to the role of cultural activity organizers and conductors rather than researchers. However, many students envisioned themselves as researchers who would conduct research and write about their ethnic minority cultures. Here students are clearly stating their opposition to wanting to only become organizers of cultural activities and are contesting where they would like to work. It seems that one of the aims of the program is then to culturally/socially reproduce ethnic minority students for this organizer role, and Kinh for the role as researchers. If researchers are viewed as more intelligent and hold a higher position within society, this policy of cultural/social reproduction could be also be viewed as reinforcing the current power relationships within society.

Conclusion

The contestation of imagined communities on higher education for ethnic minority students in Vietnam shows a clear intersection between power and knowledge. Through education, the government with its power has great influence on educational activities which affect the identities of ethnic minority students. The government still holds a lot of control over content of university curricula, recruiting students, and even testing systems through which to make its ideology and its imagined communities of education for ethnic minority students legitimate; in short, it exercises its hegemony in this way. Educational settings, in some sense, become the place of social and cultural reproduction where "organic" knowledge of ethnic minority students is discounted and therefore educational settings become part of the broader marginalization of ethnic minority students. It is likely that the contestation of identities will continue and may become more and more complex, particularly as the integration process of the Vietnamese nation into the global world progresses. And it is ethnic minority students and ethnic minority communities who are most directly affected by these contested imagined communities.

CHAPTER NINE: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

This chapter gives a description of my personal transformation after conducting this research. It is based on what I have learned about aboriginal education in Canada and New Zealand and on my experience of fieldwork in Vietnam. It shows how this research has changed my own mindset and thinking about ethnic minority cultures in general and higher education for ethnic minority students in Vietnam in particular.

My Conception of Vietnamese Culture

As I have already mentioned briefly at the beginning of this study, before coming to Canada to study, the notion of Vietnamese culture in my mind was only Kinh culture. I really did not know much about the cultures of the 53 other ethnic minority groups in my home country. I am now raising the question for myself: Why was this the case? What were the reasons behind my ignorance of the importance of ethnic minority cultures in their diverse and distinctive contribution to Vietnamese culture?

Going back to my own education, I remembered that I did not have an opportunity to learn about ethnic minority cultures. I understand that people have to take opportunities to learn and gain knowledge everywhere - not only in schools. However, like other kids in their younger years, the main information that has helped build my understanding is the knowledge and information I received from schools. Therefore, this might be one of the reasons why I did not really know about the distinctiveness of ethnic minority cultures as well as the important role of ethnic minority cultures in Vietnamese culture in general. This fact partly shows how the hegemony of knowledge is exerted in educational settings and can have great effect on students' knowledge base.

When I conducted my fieldwork in Vietnam, in the first interview session with professor Trinh, he told me that he thought that it is not only ethnic minority people who have to learn about ethnic minority cultures, but Kinh people also need to study about ethnic minority cultures. According to him, ethnic minority cultures need to be included in one of the introductory courses in the university programs and all students should have to take this course, just as all Vietnamese people have to learn about Vietnamese history. He stated that because of limited vision, many Kinh students do not have an understanding about ethnic minority cultures, cultures which can be considered a great heritage of Vietnam. He also thought that not including ethnic minority cultures as one of the basic courses that all students have to learn is a deficiency in the current educational system. Refreshing my mind about this talk with professor Trinh, I recognized that another reason for my ignorance of ethnic minority cultures is my "limited vision" on what should be included in my knowledge base. Not having had the chance to study ethnic minority cultures in school, but after conducting this research, I recognize that professor Trinh's ideas of including ethnic minority cultures as one of the basic courses that all students in Vietnam should take could be considered as a suggestion for people who are responsible for designing university programs in Vietnam. By including a course about ethnic minority cultures, not only do Kinh students have the chance to learn about the distinctiveness of Vietnamese culture, but also it is a means of countering the marginalization of ethnic minority knowledge in the educational system in general.

However, I think that it is also very important to consider what should be taught and how it should be taught in order to make sure that knowledge and information related to ethnic minority cultures and people are respectfully reflected. If ethnic minority cultures are

taught in the wrong way, it could in fact be damaging for the Kinh to learn them. For example, if the courses taught simply reinforce stereotypes that the ethnic minorities are backwards, if Kinh teachers analyze ethnic minority cultures through a vision that does not respectfully reflect the nature of ethnic minority cultures or if teaching these courses somehow shows the inferiority of the ethnic minority cultures or places ethnic minority people in subordinate roles, then the teaching of these courses will be counter-productive. They would only widen the marginalization of ethnic minority cultures and people and reinforce the hegemony of knowledge and power in the society through educational settings.

My Conception of Ethnic Minority Students

When I was a university student, I did not have the chance to study with any students who were ethnic minorities. There were ethnic minorities students in my BA program in English studies, but all students who attended the program under the "selecting and appointing" students policy are supposed to study together in a separate class from students who have taken the national university entrance exam. This is because it is believed that ethnic minority students who attend the program under the policy of selecting and appointing students cannot catch up with the other students if they study in the same class. This university policy not only took away the chance for Kinh students like me to understand about ethnic minority cultures and students, and study in a multi-cultural learning environment, but also indirectly gave Kinh students the feeling that ethnic minority students are not as good as majority ones. Such a policy again reinforces the hegemony of power by considering ethnic minority students as inferior and putting them into subordinate status in educational settings.

During my fieldwork in Vietnam, when I had a chance to talk to ethnic minority students, some expressed their difficulties, especially at the beginning years in the university, in having harmonious and respectful relationships with Kinh students in the university. Some of them even experienced disrespectful attitudes from their Kinh schoolmates because of the Kinh students' lack of understanding of ethnic minority cultures. Their experiences also made me question the effectiveness of separating ethnic minority students and Kinh students into different classes. This separation makes both ethnic minority and Kinh ethnic students miss the chance to have a better understanding of each other as well as of the cultures of different ethnic groups. Also, it is very possible that because of this division, not only Kinh students but also professors stereotype ethnic minority students and maintain the preconception that they are not as good as Kinh students. I point out this possibility because from my personal experience as both a student and an instructor, I used to hold the same stereotype towards ethnic minority students when I experienced such a division of students. Therefore, it may be useful for the institution to combine the classes of those who are selected and appointed and those who take the national entrance exam. That way, the professors will have to teach equally to all students and it might be a little harder for them to know who the ethnic minority students are. As a result, the professors may also learn that the ethnic minority students might be as competent about knowledge acquisition as their counterparts. Conversely, they may also learn to be more culturally sensitive and respect the cultures of different ethnicities.

My Conception of Education for Ethnic Minority Students

"To make people in mountainous areas catch up with those in lowlands" is a slogan that I often hear and read on public media in Vietnam as one of the key reasons for bringing

education to ethnic minority people. Before I started studying education, and even before conducting this research, I simply thought that just by creating more opportunities of higher education access for ethnic minority students, like the policy of "selecting and appointing" students, would mean bringing educational equality to them. However, after conducting my research, I now question why so many ethnic minority students fail in the national university entrance exam. I also recognize that bringing ethnic minority students more opportunities to access higher education by offering them preferential policies is not the only solution, but more important, is offering them more culturally relevant curricula and teaching methods. Although I have not taught ethnic minority students in the past, from the research findings, I think in the future if I have the chance to teach a mixed group of students from different ethnic groups or even if I teach only Kinh students, I need to be aware that students might have different knowledge and cultural backgrounds, therefore, they have their own ways of studying which might very different from each other. As an instructor, I need to be sensitive and flexible in applying teaching methods which are not only very respectful but can also help unearth students' strength and competence.

The information that I obtained from literature review on aboriginal education in Canada and New Zealand also makes me wonder and want to understand more about the educational situation in Vietnam. There are some similar situations in Vietnam to what happened in Canada and New Zealand. For example, both New Zealand and Canada at one time had a policy of assimilating and colonizing ethnic minorities. New Zealand at one time also had the policy of appointing talented students to higher level educational institutions (Simon, 2000). In this situation, New Zealand's government wanted to use these assimilated students so that other Maori could also be assimilated. The case is different in Vietnam. The

Vietnamese government has traditionally had a good relationship with many ethnic minorities and is very proud of its diversity. The policies found in this research suggest that the government has a genuine concern for preserving ethnic minority cultures, while at the same time it has the goal of maintaining political stability in a very diverse nation. Although the government has made Vietnamese the official language of instruction, this may be because of convenience rather than dominance. It might not be practical to try to have so many ethnic minority languages offered at the higher education level. This questions whether the assimilation process that occurred in Canada and New Zealand ever happened in Vietnam. I hope either I will have a chance to conduct other research or other researchers will conduct research which will focus more on the effects of government and educational institutions' policies and imagined communities in Vietnam.

Also, from the literature review, I found that ethnic minority students are envisioned as disadvantaged in both Canada and New Zealand. This image for ethnic minority students was also found through my research in Vietnam. This similar imagined community for ethnic minority students makes me think of another question: Are there universal imagined communities that exist for ethnic minority students in other countries in the world that have diverse ethnic compositions? Raising this question I was wondering is it true that regarding the difference of cultures, there is often a shared pattern of imagined communities envisioned by a dominant group towards non-dominant groups of people which shows the social order in the society. Or another situation is that both New Zealand and Canada at one time had a policy of assimilating and colonizing ethnic minorities; and in these two countries, a stage has been entered into which the government has recognized values, cultures and traditions of aboriginal people and aboriginal people have more control in determining their education. I

was wondering if there are identifiable stages in the construction of imagined communities by a government and by ethnic minorities. If yes, is it considered as educational movement and also in this educational movement, at which stage is minority education in Vietnam at present? From my understanding, I think that currently Vietnam is at the stage of acknowledgement and cooperation. In other words, the government has recognized the importance of ethnic minority cultures and wants to find a way forward together with ethnic minority communities to preserve and develop ethnic minority cultures. One of these ways is through education. However, the findings show that the government still wields a lot of control (hegemony) over the education of ethnic minority students.

The findings also show that none of the ethnic minority students who participated in the research mentioned anything about their role in controlling their own education. Therefore, it is difficult to tell if they are taking a proactive role or not. To prevent the loss of culture, it would be better if taking control of their own education was one of their primary concerns. This fact shows a possible lack of counter-hegemony from ethnic minority people in Vietnam which is different from the situation in Canada and New Zealand. However, I also think of other possibilities that might be explained for the fact that students did not mention about their role in controlling their own education. It is possible that I may not have asked the correct questions to elicit this response, or that ethnic minority students may have been reluctant to express their thoughts about these issues publicly because they might have some worries about what might happen if they challenge the dominant view.

In general, through this research, I learned that ethnic minority cultures play an important and great role in making Vietnamese culture diverse and distinctive, and that the development of ethnic minority groups can also contribute to the common development of

nation as a whole. Therefore, it is important that an appropriate education in general, and higher education in particular, for ethnic minority students who are key intellectual resources of these areas, should be taken into full consideration. I look forward to seeing more research on minority education in Vietnam conducted by both Vietnamese and international researchers in the field which responds to the identified needs of ethnic minority students and their communities.

Further Research

Further research is needed not only on finding a more appropriate teaching methodology for ethnic minority students, but also on the effect of professors' attitudes, especially Kinh professors, towards ethnic minority students. How can they bring a friendlier and healthier learning atmosphere to classrooms?

The involvement of ethnic minority Elders in education for their children did not come up clearly in the findings of this research. None of the participants directly mentioned the role of Elders or local control of education. I did ask about the role of the Elders in education but did not receive much of a response from any of the participants. Only some elements relevant to culturally appropriate curricula and getting the ethnic minority groups involved in curricula design were mentioned. However, the important role of the Elders in passing indigenous knowledge and cultures to young generations in both Canada and New Zealand is highly appreciated. Further research in local communities with ethnic minorities may reveal whether ethnic minorities have control of primary and secondary education to some degree, whether the curriculum is culturally relevant, and if the Elders do participate or could participate at what levels of education.

Research on the imagined communities of the Government for ethnic minority students in other fields, such as English language study, computer science, technology, and medicine, is also needed. Such research would contribute to a better understanding of what the Government envisions for ethnic minority students both in their local communities and within the Vietnamese nation. It is possible that the vision for ethnic minority students in the context of this research is specific only to the students that are studying in the Ethnic Minority Cultures program. Further research would help clarify this point.

Finally, further attention could be paid to the imagined communities of ethnic minorities that are envisioned by the general Vietnamese public. In this study, there was a small contrast between the government and the faculty of the Department of Ethnic Minority Cultures. It would be interesting to see if most ordinary Kinh people share one of these visions or if there are other barriers preventing ethnic minorities from achieving high levels of education. Much work remains to be done.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW TOPICS AND SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR PROFESSORS

Objectives of the program

- What do you expect students to do after they finish BA program in Ethnic Minority Culture Studies?

- What is/are the most important things, in your opinion, that students have to gain from this BA program in Ethnic Minority Culture Studies?

- Is there anything else that you would like to say about the objectives of this program?

Curriculum

- Which are the most important courses in the current curriculum of this program? Why?

- Which are the least important courses in the current curriculum of this program? Why?

- What, if anything, would you like to see the changed in the current curriculum of this program?

- What issues do you find important to be included in the curriculum of this program?

- How do you think representatives of ethnic minority group should best be included in designing curriculum for the BA program in Ethnic Minority Culture Studies?

- Is there anything else that you would like to say about the current curriculum applied to this program?

Teaching and learning environment

- What kind of learning environment have you tried to create for your students?

- How are students made to feel comfortable at the university?

- What do you think of the learning resources at this university?

- What kind of teaching methods do you typically use inside and outside of the classroom? Why?

- How have you incorporated ethnic minority knowledge and ways of life into the classroom?

- In general, what do you think of the students in this program?

- Is there anything else that you would like to say about the teaching and learning environment in the department?

Other

- Is there anything else that we have not talked about that you think we should have?

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW TOPICS AND SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

Learning Objectives

- How did you decide to enroll in the BA program in Ethnic Minority Culture Studies?

- What do you hope to gain from the BA program in Ethnic Minority Culture Studies?

- How do you think it will impact your life after graduation?

- Is there anything else that you would like to say about your learning objectives in this program?

Curriculum

- Which courses in the current curriculum do you find to be the most important and interesting? Why?

- Which courses in the current curriculum do you find to be the least important and uninteresting? Why?

- What do you hope to gain from the current curriculum of the program?

- In your opinion, how well does the current curriculum contribute to your learning objectives?

- What have been the most useful things that you have learnt so far?

- What, if anything, would you like to see the changed in the current curriculum of this program?

- Is there anything else that you would like to say about the current curriculum of this program?

Teaching and Learning Environment

- What do you think of the learning resources at this university?

- How comfortable do you feel at the university? Why?

- What do you like about the teaching methods in this department? Why?

- What would you like to improve about the teaching methods in this department? Why?

- Is there anything else that you would like to say about the teaching and learning environment in the department or university?

Future Plans

- What are your aspirations for the future?

- What do you expect to do after you finish this BA program in Ethnic Minority Culture Studies?

- Where do want to work after graduating from university?

- Is there anything else you would like to say about your future plans?

Other

- Is there anything else that we have not talked about that you would like to talk about?