



**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE

Northumbria University
School of Arts and Social Sciences
Department of Humanities

Master's Dissertation

MA TESOL

Module Code: EL7005
Supervisor: Graham Hall

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO PROJECT-BASED LEARNING AND ITS EFFECT
ON UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' COGNITION USING NEW
ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS IN VIETNAM**

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ABSTRACT

The research investigated upper secondary school teachers' cognition on project-based learning which has been applied in the new English textbooks. The main areas of study related to teachers' perceptions consist of project based learning's definitions, the teacher's roles in project based learning implementation, the benefits and challenges of project based learning in language teaching and learning. The results from questionnaires and interviews show that most high school teachers have general understanding of project based learning and reveal a positive support to applying teaching project in language learning for students. Moreover, the findings from the research appear that teachers have to confront with 3 major difficulties when carrying out project based learning: students' competency, preparation time and facilities. From these results, some improvements are suggested to reinforce the advantages and the success of project based learning in the language teaching and learning in general and in the new English text book in particular.

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ABBREVIATIONS

PBL: Project-based learning

MOET: The Ministry of Education and Training

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PART I

INTRODUCTION

1. Background for study

The English language is known to be the most widely spoken around the whole world. Its importance on the world stage has not gone unnoticed by the human race, and is of particular concern to the Vietnamese government. Knowledge of English is an important for enabling communications between different people around the globe and is seen as a vital key to success in a number of different fields. English is also the primary means of communication for the global business area as well and so is essential learning for any wishing to engage in this market be it as part of the workforce or engaging in research within it. Vietnamese educators have therefore prioritized the teaching of English language by making it a mandatory subject in all educational levels from primary, secondary and up to university level education. Having knowledge of other languages like this has become a necessity for potential employees seeking jobs.

As a result of the perceived importance of this, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has in recent times issued the following legislation: Decision 5209/QĐ- BGDĐT on November 23rd 2012 for “Approval of Pilot English Curriculum for Vietnamese high Schools” - in which three new English texts English 10, English 11 and English12 were designed for teaching in high schools by MOET with the aim of enhancing language abilities and competence in communications in English through the four main skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. The format and content of the new texts differ somewhat from the texts they replaced by focusing on task-based approaches. Project work and reflective learning is part of each learning unit - which is new to both teacher and student alike. Project work focuses on the students working in groups, which sees the students cooperating on solving problems together with groups of their friends. Once completed, then the students are required to present their results as reports or presentations, which could well involve the use of presentation software such as Powerpoint. The teacher role in this is an officiator and guide - not as the traditional one-way transferor of knowledge in the old methods. To find out if this sort of approach is going to be effective in the classroom, it is essential to carry out a study into the perceptions of the teachers into this new project-based learning approach. This is important as these perceptions may well have quite an effect on teaching these classes in the future. The teacher perceptions to look

at are: knowledge, attitude, evaluation and ideas about project-based learning (Borg 2006). In truth many such studies have taken place already, however studies relating to teachers perceptions on this approach when concerning the teaching of second languages are very limited. This is why the author of this study has chosen to investigate this with high school teachers looking at its definition, benefits, roles and issues for the implementation of project-based learning.

2. The aims of the study

The research focuses on investigating project based learning and its effect on upper secondary school teacher's recognition in teaching new English textbooks. The results of the research will address some challenges the teachers have to encounter and suggest some teaching approaches of project based learning (PBL) applied for teachers in their teaching contexts. As a result, it helps to reinforce the success of English language teaching and learning in high school level.

3. Research questions

The following research questions were raised for the purposes of this study:

1. What challenges exist when making use of project-based learning?
2. What are the teaching professionals' cognitions on using project-based learning?
in relation to the new texts for teaching English?

4. Research outline

The research is consisted of three major parts:

Part 1: Introduction reveals the background for research, the aims of the study, research questions and research outline.

Part 2: Development covers three parts as the following:

Chapter I: Literature review relates to theoretical background of the research including project-based learning, teachers' cognition on PBL, new English textbooks overview.

Chapter II: Methodology covers the context and the methodology utilized in the research

Chapter III: Results presents comprehensive data analysis.

Part 3: Conclusion summarizes the results, limitations, recommendations and some suggestions for further research.