

**Unpacking the Process of Overseas Knowledge
Recontextualisation in Returnee Entrepreneurship
- A Learning Perspective**

A study of returnee entrepreneurs in Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

International entrepreneurship research has recently been directed towards returnee entrepreneurship, a phenomenon in which individuals who acquire knowledge in overseas developed markets return to start businesses in their home emerging markets. Returnee entrepreneurs serve as knowledge brokers in their home country. However, research has yet to explain how they transform their overseas knowledge, which is contextually bound, into entrepreneurial outcomes – a process termed overseas knowledge recontextualisation. The thesis positions itself at the intersection of returnee entrepreneurship, international knowledge transfer, and entrepreneurial learning, and explores the phenomenon from both a learning and a socio-cognitive perspective. It approaches the recontextualisation process at an individual entrepreneurial level to answer three research questions: (1) What constitutes the knowledge brought back by returnee entrepreneurs?; (2) What is the process by which returnee entrepreneurs recontextualise their overseas knowledge?; and (3) How do returnee entrepreneurs learn to facilitate the process of overseas knowledge recontextualisation?

A qualitative exploratory approach was employed comprising 14 in-depth cases of returnee entrepreneurs in three cities in Vietnam - an emerging economy in South East Asia where returnee entrepreneurship has become increasingly prevalent. To ensure the rigour and validity of the research, multiple data sources were used for triangulation. Given the dynamics of the recontextualisation process and the aim to build a data driven theory, the analysis was underpinned by process thinking and grounded theory principles.

The thesis contributes to three distinctive strands of literature. First, it extends the returnee entrepreneurship literature by unpacking the holistic process model of knowledge recontextualisation which involves sensemaking, experimenting, and integrating knowledge, each of which is facilitated by the respective learning mechanisms and intertwined with entrepreneurial outcomes. Second, it adds new understanding at an individual entrepreneurial level to international knowledge transfer literature by highlighting the idiosyncratic role of returnees as simultaneous transferors and receivers of knowledge. Specifically, it elucidates mixed-embedded knowledge structures of returnees and identifies key recontextualisation practices pertaining to returnee entrepreneurship. Third, it adds on entrepreneurial learning literature by unpacking the complex learning mechanisms that facilitate the process of recontextualisation. Finally, it proposes that, throughout the recontextualisation process, returnees not only enact the overseas knowledge per se, they also transform themselves and influence the home country through cognitive, social, psychological and behavioural processes which denote the micro-foundations of the entrepreneurial dynamic capability displayed by returnees.

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Research Thesis Submission


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LIST OF CONFERENCE PAPERS AND PRESENTATIONS

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2	International knowledge re-contextualisation and social network during returnees' entrepreneurial process in emerging economies	2016	Anh Truong	Doctoral Consortium, British Academy of Management, Newcastle, UK, September 2016
3	Dynamic entrepreneurial capabilities of returnee entrepreneurs to transform new international knowledge into a viable venture in emerging economies	2016	Anh Truong	SIG Entrepreneurship Doctoral Day, British Academy of Management, Birmingham, Newcastle, UK, October 2016
4	International knowledge recontextualisation and social network during returnees' entrepreneurial process in emerging economies	2016	Anh Truong	ECSB-Doctoral Seminar on Entrepreneurship and Small Business, Antwerp, Belgium, November 2016
5	Recontextualisation of International Knowledge by Returnee Entrepreneurs	2017	Yen Tran, Xiaohui Liu, Anh Truong	Academy of International Business Annual Meeting 2017 - Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 2 nd July 17 - 5 th July 2017
6	Knowledge recontextualization mechanisms and entrepreneurial paths in returnee entrepreneurship – an exploratory study in Vietnam	2018	Anh Truong, Yen Tran	AIB UK&I Conference 2018 – International business strategies in a changing commercial and political landscape, Birmingham, UK, 12 th April -14 th April 2018
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GLOSSARY

Returnee entrepreneurs are individuals who have studied or worked in developed economies for at least two years and then returned to start their own businesses in their home countries (Wright et al., 2008).

Entrepreneurial mobility denotes entrepreneurial activities following the movement of individuals from one context to another. There are two different types of entrepreneurial mobility: individuals who leave their employer organisations to start their own companies or individuals who move from one geographic context to another to do so. The former refers to employee entrepreneurship while the latter refers to international entrepreneurship.

Knowledge is a “fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information. It originates and is applied in the minds of knowers” (Davenport and Prusak, 1998, p. 5). Knowledge comprises an individual’s state of understanding, know-how, and justified beliefs.

Overseas knowledge is knowledge pertaining to the host country.

Knowledge recontextualisation in returnee entrepreneurship refers to the process returnee entrepreneurs engage in to transform overseas knowledge into entrepreneurial outcomes in the home country.

Knowledge structure refers to the organisation of individuals’ knowledge.

Mixed-embeddedness denotes the embeddedness of individuals in multiple social, cultural, and political contexts.

Entrepreneurial learning refers to the ways in which entrepreneurs acquire and transform their experience, knowledge, and expertise into new knowledge and insights. These then facilitate the recontextualisation of overseas knowledge during the creation and development of new ventures.