

Vietnamese studies training programs in Vietnam in the context of international integration: Reality and development orientation

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Abstract:

Vietnamese studies was launched as a training program in Vietnam in the last decade of the twentieth century at Da Lat University. Since 1994, Vietnamese studies has gradually become established as a highly applicable science in the context of international integration. After nearly 30 years, dozens of international and national seminars on research and training orientation have been organised to evaluate early achievements as well as shortcomings and limitations that need to be addressed. This study is based on an analysis of the development process to find answers to the fundamental problems of Vietnam so it can thereby perform its roles and missions well under the current context of international integration. Vietnamese studies is a subject built on general knowledge about Vietnam's geography, history, literature, people, and culture. This paper is aimed to answer what distinguishes Vietnamese studies from other social sciences and humanities disciplines; how should interdisciplinarity, rather than a mere addition to forming general knowledge, be clearly understood to carry out the true nature; and how should the Vietnamese studies training program organization be designed to meet the new requirements set by the integration context. To achieve the research objectives mentioned above, the historical - documentary method, and observation - interview method were used in this paper.

Keywords: current situation, development, international integration, mission, Vietnamese studies.

Classification number: 10

1. Introduction

Globally speaking, Vietnamese studies were born within the framework of area studies and are a science that generally studies and evaluates Vietnam. Scholars may come from a wide variety of disciplines like history, geography, languages, and political economy; however, their studies are often interdisciplinary and form general, comprehensive knowledge about Vietnam. These studies aim to provide a comprehensive and general understanding and find out specific and unique factors about the country and people of Vietnam.

In the twentieth century, Vietnamese studies

developed into a major field of study in colleges across many countries such as the US, Russia, Germany, Korea, Japan, Australia, and China. The focal issues to be studied were the Anti-American resistance war, from the war for independence, the war in South Vietnam, and the US sabotage of the construction of socialism in North Vietnam, as well as the Southwest border war and the Northern border war. The topic of socialism construction and the "Doi Moi" issue in Vietnam were also studied. By the 1990s, the research themes expanded to economic and social issues.

However, since Vietnam has deeply integrated into international life, developed rapidly in economy and trade, and opened itself to the world

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market, the research has become more diversified. In recent years, research topics on Vietnam have mainly focused on political institution reform, foreign policy, socio-economic reform, sovereignty protection, sea and island issues, religion, belief, development, poverty eradication, and environment, to name a few. An overview of this issue was analysed, evaluated, and commented on by V.M. Giang (2008) [1]. The study provides an overview of Vietnamese studies in a broad range of countries around the world including Russia and Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, Korea, Japan, Australia, China, and the United States.

D.G. Marr (1981) [2], as well as C. Borri, et al. (2011) [3], discussed Vietnam's post-war society, where colonialism and the two resistance wars left an imprint on every aspect. In the book "The Ethnography of Vietnam's Central Highlander: A Historical Contextualization, 1850-1900", O. Salemink (2003) [4] sketches out the colonial society of Vietnam under the anthropologist perspectives and how colonialists established power in the context of local ethnography in the Central Highlands. Indigenous populations of the Central Highlands of Vietnam were often centred in colonialization and social transformation analyses.

Contemporary studies of international scholars on Vietnam present a wide variety of aspects. A.L. Vuving (2008) [5] examines the country's challenges and opportunities after being a member of the World Trade Organization. Such an event is evidence of Vietnam's new development towards becoming closer to the world. M. Sidel (1992) [6] gave a detailed analysis of the legal structure in Vietnam and how it has been transformed toward the socialist-oriented model developed by the Communist Party of Vietnam.

M. DiGregorio, et al (2007) [7] presented anthropologists' perspectives on the spiritual life of Vietnamese people. C. Annear, et al. (2018) [8] introduced Vietnam's cuisine and argues whether there is a unified Vietnamese gastronomy, or if it differs between regions and cultures.

After the significant contributions of international scholars to Vietnam in the twentieth century, the twenty-first century has witnessed the rapid growth of generations of domestic and overseas Vietnamese scholars. The trend of collaborative research is also increasingly popular, which allows the issues to be further examined from different perspectives, and thus Vietnam Studies flourished in many countries such as Japan, Korea, China, the US, and Australia.

Regarding South Korea, the Korean Association of Vietnamese Studies (KAVS) and the Vietnamese Studies Review in Korea have been the premise for future academic success in Vietnamese studies. In China, Vietnamese studies began to receive more attention from the early years of the 21st century. Centres for Vietnamese studies have been opened at universities, academies, and research institutes. These include the Centre for Vietnamese Studies (Zhejiang University, Southwest Jiaotong University, National University of Kaohsiung, Guangxi Normal University) and the Vietnamese Studies Department (under the Yunnan Institute of Science and Technology and Academy of History - Zhengzhou University). The main areas of interest for research are ethnology, Vietnam in relation with China and Southeast Asia, Vietnam's economy, Vietnamese language, and Vietnamese literature. The Journal of Vietnamese Studies of the Research Association of Vietnam publishes research on Vietnamese history and contemporary Vietnam in the US. In Australia, Vietnam Update Workshops updating Vietnamese cultural and social issues have been held since 2011.

Domestically, international conferences on Vietnamese studies organised by Vietnam National University, Hanoi in collaboration with the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences since 1998 have discussed many oriented issues for researching, training, and developing Vietnamese studies to meet the emerging requirements. Multilateral cooperation projects in research are also increasing [9]. The Faculty of Vietnamese Studies collaborated with the Faculty of Vietnamese

Studies and Language of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities - Vietnam National University, Hanoi to organize the first conference on researching and teaching Vietnamese language and Vietnamese studies in 2008. The conference, which was held in Phan Rang city (Ninh Thuan province), drew both domestic and international scholars. In the following years, the Faculty of Vietnamese Studies held an annual inter-faculty or inter-university academic conference on Vietnamese studies (in collaboration with the Faculty of Vietnamese Studies and Language, University of Social Sciences and Humanities - Vietnam National University, Hanoi, and the Faculty of Vietnamese Studies, Hue University of Foreign Languages). The first international conference on Vietnamese studies was officially held in 2013 by the University of Social Sciences and Humanities - Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh city. Since then, the international conference on Vietnam studies, which is held every two years, has developed into a gathering place for academics from all over the globe. The fifth conference on researching and teaching Vietnamese language and Vietnamese studies was the most recent conference.

In Vietnam, the first BA program in Vietnamese studies was launched in 1994. A survey result showed that foreigners who choose to study this major have some characteristics as follows: i) Need to develop the capacity to use Vietnamese to perform jobs related to Vietnam; and/or ii) Have the need to understand Vietnamese culture to facilitate their interaction and living in Vietnam. Vietnamese people who pursue Vietnamese studies have some essential characteristics as follows: i) Have a tendency to social sciences but do not delve into a particular field; ii) Expect to have open job opportunities because this is a new major with diverse job positions (tour guide, press - media, employees in companies with foreign elements, and a few geared towards teaching Vietnamese culture, Vietnamese studies from high school to university) [10]; and/or iii) Seeking opportunities to exchange with overseas training institutions.

Foreigners and the Vietnamese, through their different fields of works, contribute to spanning Vietnam and the world. Therefore, if the training is well organised, Vietnamese students will be a vital nucleus to "connect", promote the image, and spread the unique values of Vietnamese culture to the world, which all contribute to enhancing the position and soft power of Vietnamese culture. This makes an essential contribution to the country's goal of cultural, social, and other integration to "complement the values and progress of world culture and civilization, enrich the national culture and promote social progress... towards narrowing the development gap with the region and the world in these fields"¹.

2. Research purpose

It is evident that, although it has only been established for a short time, this training major has achieved some achievements: i) Regarding output: a bachelor's degree holder in Vietnamese studies can find jobs in diverse positions and fields of work; ii) The training program and training organization has gradually become stable and professional, and iii) The teaching contingent is increasing as the research and teaching capacity has been improved toward specialization and professionalism. However, the reality of teaching and researching Vietnamese studies points to the fact that there are unsolved challenges, which lead to confusion in program building and training organization. Therefore, this paper aims to discuss issues that are considered challenges to the development of Vietnamese studies in the current context of deep international integration.

3. Research question

The question is, where is Vietnamese studies after nearly 30 years of training and issues that can be considered the "core" of a science? Ordinarily, Vietnamese studies is mainly built based on general knowledge about Vietnam's geography, history, literature, people, and culture, so, after

¹Decision No. 40/QĐ-TTg, dated January 7th, 2016 of the Prime Minister approving the master strategy for international integration to 2020, vision to 2030.

all, what distinguishes Vietnamese studies from other social sciences and humanities disciplines? How should interdisciplinarity, rather than a mere addition to forming general knowledge, be clearly understood to carry out the true nature? To achieve the goals and mission, especially in the current context of international integration, how should the Vietnamese studies training program organization be done?

4. Methodology

To achieve the above research objectives, we used the following research methods:

First, the historical-documentary method was used in analysing the contents related to the perception of the Vietnam Studies major, training programs, and studies on the organization of training in Vietnamese studies of domestic education and training institutions.

The observation, i.e., in-depth interview method, was used to collect information and consult experts to have more grounds to assess the current situation and propose the development direction of the major.

5. Results

5.1. Continuing to discuss the definition and mission of Vietnamese studies

Despite its recent formation and development, Vietnamese studies has experienced ups and downs and gradually grounded. Besides the favourable conditions for development, Vietnamese studies have faced a number of challenges, i.e., quality assurance, post-graduated employment, or research capability.

The social context with the development reality of industry poses many problems for us to think about, including the need to re-establish a definition of Vietnamese studies from which to have a basis for building and updating training programs, renovating training organizations to create highlights, and form the significant difference from other humanities and social sciences majors.

The concept of Vietnamese studies and its position, role, and mission have been mentioned by many forums. Regular international conferences

co-organised every four years by the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences and Vietnam National University, Hanoi since 1998, and international conferences on research and teaching in Vietnamese studies organised by University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh city, as well as national and international conferences organised by Vietnamese studies training institutions have paid attention to this issue. Accordingly, "Vietnamese studies" is identified as a science about the country and people of Vietnam, a science studying Vietnam in an interdisciplinary and regional approach that has matured and changed to adapt to different historical periods [11]; Vietnamese studies deals with issues of cultural identity, acculturation, and diffusion [12]. "Identity" and "country and people of Vietnam" are essential keywords of Vietnamese studies. So, we will see where Vietnam's identity and people are most clearly expressed, which is certainly not limited to national borders. It requires an open posture, comparing the region and the world, and looking out to the world to understand Vietnam.

It has been shown in research that, "Vietnamese studies" has both broad and narrow meanings. Broad meanings refer to the study of Vietnam as specialized studies such as philosophy, religion, history, politics, economy, culture, art, language, and other natural and social sciences, which means that all studies whose subject is Vietnam belong to Vietnamese studies [11]. In the narrow sense, "Vietnamese studies" is understood as studies about the Vietnamese language and Vietnamese culture, with its constituent elements, and the relationship between traditional and contemporary cultures. Thus, it is understandable that Vietnamese studies include studies whose subject is Vietnam. However, the question that should be discussed here is: What is the purpose of the study? It is certainly not possible to solve a problem in the direction of a major in History, Literature, and Culture Studies. It must be directed to another purpose, possibly from specialized knowledge. Vietnamese studies will expand in an interdisciplinary direction to achieve

a comprehensive and integrated knowledge system about Vietnam to solve the problem of contemporary life.

In the process of formation and development, Vietnam Studies in Vietnam was born when Vietnam actively integrated into the international economy to accelerate industrialisation and promote trade outside Vietnam's territory. Deeply integrating into economic unions and organizations and attracting investment from developed countries are essential goals of Vietnam today. To achieve these goals, integrating economically, promoting cultural exchanges to enhance mutual understanding and trust, thereby sharing benefits brought about by globalisation, making practical contributions to the development of international cooperation in many fields² are all top priorities. Therefore, it can be explained that Vietnamese studies are entirely different from specialized studies such as Vietnamese language studies, geography, history, economics, and other specialized research areas about Vietnam. This field of science aims to increase a comprehensive understanding of Vietnam with the world. Accordingly, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees in Vietnamese studies will become a vital force that forms the "bridge" between Vietnam and the world. The knowledge about Vietnam that this force will be an essential reference for making investment and development policies for Vietnam. However, regarding the current regulations and progress on enrolment and training, Vietnamese studies still has a long way to go to meet social needs. This is the opinion raised by a number of grassroots-level managerial officers when answering our interview: "Indeed, learners have not reached the expectations. The reasons for this, in my opinion, lies in two issues: the low-quality input, and the education and training have not fully based on learners' capability, which leads to insufficient results of education" (male, 66, Hanoi National University of Education).

²Communist Party of Vietnam Online Newspaper (2021), "Vietnam's foreign policy of the 13th Party Congress inherits, develops and perfects the foreign policy of the reform period (*)", <http://dangcongsan.vn/thoi-su/duong-loi-doi-ngoai-dai-hoi-dang-xiii-ke-thua-phat-trien-va-hoan-thien-duong-loi-doi-ngoai-thoi-ky-doi-moi-598434.html>, accessed 15 July 2021 (in Vietnamese).

Therefore, it can be seen from the context of origin, goals, and missions, Vietnamese studies makes a big difference compared to other sciences. For example, 1) Form and develop for learners general knowledge about Vietnam as a historical-cultural, social, geostrategic space in relation to the region and the world; 2) Form and develop analytical capacity, ability to interpret the dialectical relationship between tradition and contemporaneity; between the appearance and characteristics of Vietnam's culture and society with its constituent elements; 3) With integrated and interdisciplinary thinking, a system of primary, modern, and general knowledge about the country and people of Vietnam help learners with development guidelines, investment policies, and to identify the critical factors for promoting the country's image.

From theoretical and practical aspects as analysed above, we define Vietnamese studies as a science that studies the country and people of Vietnam. Through research, evaluation, and systematization to shape general knowledge, Vietnamese studies clarify geographical space, politics, history-culture, economy-society, security-defence, and Vietnam's position in relations with the region and the world. The knowledge system acquired from Vietnam studies is the scientific basis for positioning Vietnam in its past, present, and future movement trends, identifying the unique values of the Vietnamese nation, building and promoting the country's image, and seeking and promoting resources for national security and development goals.

Vietnamese studies at domestic training institutions have two programs: Vietnamese and foreigners can enrol in regular study courses under the annual system or the credit-based system ranging from 125 to 130 credits in four years. Besides, the cooperation of Vietnamese studies training institutions in Vietnam with universities and academies specialising in Vietnamese, Southeast Asian, or Asian languages has also achieved many results. Currently, the 2+2, 1+3, and 3+1 forms are the most popular in training cooperation.

5.2. Achievements and problems raised in the training of Vietnamese studies in Vietnam

Achievements after nearly 30 years of training in Vietnamese studies are shown in the following aspects:

i) Many bachelors and masters in Vietnamese studies have been trained. On average, 5,000-10,000 bachelors in Vietnamese studies are trained each year [4].

ii) The training program has been improved. The long-standing training institutions have made many improvements to the training program with many different versions, based on assessing the needs of the labour market and the needs of learners³.

iii) Vietnamese studies' international exchanges and cooperation have expanded, and training and research have increased.

iv) The output of bachelor's and master's degrees in Vietnamese studies is relatively wide, meeting many job positions such as tour guide, press-media editor; teacher in Vietnamese studies and culture; cultural and tourism management specialists; office staff, and teachers of Vietnamese language and Vietnamese culture to foreigners.

In addition to the achieved results, the Vietnamese studies training organizations in Vietnam still has many difficulties that need to be quickly resolved. Many international and national conferences have discussed, evaluated, and proposed solutions to these problems and backlogs over the past two decades. In summary, according to us, there are concerning problems in the organization of training in Vietnamese studies as follows:

i) The lack of consistent training programs between institutions leads to an inconsistency in the perception of the major. Some universities are inclined towards "traditional Vietnamese studies" to provide knowledge about Vietnam, focusing

³Shown in different versions of training program of Hanoi National University of Education, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi and many other training institutions.

mainly on natural characteristics, history, culture, and the Vietnamese language⁴. Some institutions are language-culture and tourism-oriented⁵ focusing on teaching the Vietnamese language, cultural, and tourism. Some institutions focus on training tour guides.

ii) The training method is mainly academic and does not focus on international cooperation, which is a mandatory requirement of Vietnamese studies, especially in the current integration context. However, according to our observations, international cooperation in training is currently only one way, mainly foreign training institutions send their students to Vietnam to study. The two-way "exchange" in training cooperation has not taken place. The main reasons, in our opinion, are due to the limitation of financial resources and foreign language ability of learners.

iii) Foreign languages are not considered an essential criterion in the output standard for Vietnamese students. The reason is partly from the low quality of the entrance exam, so the training institutions have not raised the output standard of students' foreign language ability.

6. Discussion and suggestion

6.1. It is necessary to clarify the difference between Vietnamese studies and other social sciences to build objectives, output standards, and training programs.

Through the survey of Vietnamese training programs from college, university, and master's and doctoral levels, we can see that Vietnamese studies contains knowledge of many different sciences, namely, at least a mixture of five social sciences (Linguistics, History, Geography, Literature, and Tourism). So, what distinguishes Vietnamese studies from other humanities and social sciences

⁴See also Training programs of University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Hanoi National University of Education (program version from the academic year 2019-2020).

⁵See also Training programs of Hanoi National University of Education (from the academic year 2018-2019 and earlier).

majors? As the definition established above, once again, it can be confirmed that Vietnamese studies primarily needs to make a difference from other sciences in the following contents: 1) To form and develop learners' general knowledge about Vietnam as a historical, cultural, social, geostrategic space in relation to the region and the world; 2) To form and develop analytical capacity, ability to interpret the dialectical relationship between tradition and contemporaneity; between the appearance and characteristics of Vietnam's culture and society with its constituent elements; 3) With integrated and interdisciplinary thinking, a system of primary, modern and general knowledge about the country and people of Vietnam helps learners to advise on development guidelines, investment policies, identify the critical factors for promoting the country's image. Vietnamese studies require that the identification, analysis, and assessment of Vietnam's problems be integrated, interdisciplinary in relation to the world. This is an essential and comprehensive knowledge system for making investment and development policies for Vietnam.

According to such determination of the mission and characteristics of the major, a question arises: which job position is a graduate of Vietnamese studies well suited for? Which job position do Vietnamese studies graduates perform better than others? In our opinion, a bachelor's degree in Vietnamese studies can meet the following job positions: i) Experts on Vietnam in organizations with foreign elements or consultants on development policies in Vietnam; ii) Vietnamese language and culture teachers for foreigners; iii) Socio-cultural experts from commune-level and upwards; and iv) Tour guides. Although the job positions are very open in the recruitment mechanism of ministries, educational institutions, or any other administrative and non-business units, graduates of Vietnamese studies are not included in the list of qualifications prioritized for recruitment. This issue has a negative impact on the job opportunities of learners, especially excellent learners. Therefore, at the university level, institutions cannot attract them.

6.2. How should the output standards, training programs, and training organizations be improved to meet the requirements?

From the previously mentioned concept of Vietnamese studies, it is believed that a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree in Vietnamese studies must have the following competencies:

- i) Understand the country, people, and culture of Vietnam comprehensively, especially contemporary Vietnamese issues, interpret socio-cultural issues from their constituent elements.
- ii) Appreciate Vietnamese culture, respect the diversity of world culture.
- iii) Be proficient in at least one foreign language, have good communication skills in a multicultural environment.

In order to meet the training objectives and output standards of the major, the training program needs to be built with the basic knowledge and skill standards of i) The appearance and characteristics of Vietnamese culture in which it is necessary to draw out the fundamental cultural values that carry the core ideology of the nation; ii) Economic - cultural - social issues of contemporary Vietnam; iii) Skills in using Vietnamese language, foreign languages and information technology; and iv) Communication skills in a multicultural environment. According to our survey⁶, current bachelor's degree programs in Vietnamese studies do not meet the requirements of the output standards according to the above concept. The most common issue is that the program lacks focus and spreads over too many objectives leading to a failure to build the major's identity. The second phenomenon is that the number of credits for foreign languages is small, the output standards for foreign languages are low (commonly level B1), and there is no focus on communication skills in professional activities.

⁶We studied the bachelor's degree programs in Vietnamese studies of Hanoi National University of Education, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi and University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh city.

When organising the teaching of Vietnamese studies, attention should be paid to i) Enhance reality and practice; ii) Seek opportunities for cooperation in training with foreign countries; iii) Focus on developing communication and behavioural skills, especially in a multicultural environment; and iv) Focus on developing skills in using Vietnamese and foreign languages.

It is believed that training in Vietnamese studies must be similar to the training for foreign language students, i.e., it is necessary to immerse learners in an efficient environment, especially the international integration environment. Accordingly, the coordination with domestic organizations and enterprises, increasing practice and, especially, enhancing exchange and cooperation in training, should be considered a mandatory requirement. It is possible to consider that the training cooperation capacity will become a mandatory criterion for enrolment.

6.3. So, what are the entrance requirements for students enrolling in Vietnamese studies?

With the above analysis, in our opinion, in order to build human resources in Vietnamese studies that meet the requirements of the major in the context of international integration, the enrolment criteria also need to be researched and analysed to ensure the excellent implementation of the established output standards:

Regarding international students, it is necessary to improve measures to attract learners by improving the training program, improving the teaching model towards flexibility, strengthening cooperation in training to create the most favourable conditions for learners, and implementing a blended teaching model between face-to-face and online learning. The training organization should strengthen the language and cultural exchange activities between international students and Vietnamese students by organising language and cultural exchange clubs; organising contests to improve the ability to use the Vietnamese language and improve understanding about Vietnam and the world; and enhancing and increasing practical activities. By analysing training programs of Vietnamese language or

Southeast Asian Area Studies majors at universities and institutes in Korea, China, and Japan - the countries with the most significant number of international students studying Vietnamese studies today - we recognise some points that need attention in developing training programs: 1) *Enrich the knowledge of elective courses*; 2) *Focus on the knowledge that can be linked with training programs of foreign educational institutions*; and 3) *Enhance Vietnamese language skills*. A training program that ensures these factors will increase its ability to attract learners and training institutions and find more cooperation in training along the direction of 3+1, 2+2, or even 1+3. On the other hand, courses such as Marxist-Leninist Philosophy are also challenging for international students. So, is it possible to flexibly apply the test-evaluation method by using the self-study style in the native language or English?

Regarding Vietnamese students, it is necessary to gradually improve the enrolment criteria and avoid quantity-focused enrolment in some education agencies. Besides, it is also necessary to have a policy to recruit human resources in Vietnamese studies for specific professions. In training, there should be a mechanism for cooperation and academic exchange. Careful selection, even prioritizing the selection of a second degree, is an issue to be further discussed.

6.4. Do the learning materials and teaching models meet the requirements of current training practice?

Textbooks and teaching materials are issues that need proper attention and investment. Our survey points out that the number of textbooks and specialised materials for Vietnamese studies is insufficient and causes great training difficulties, especially for foreigners. The survey results show that: i) textbooks and materials for developing skills in using Vietnamese account for the most significant number, which can meet the primary need of direct teaching; ii) textbooks and reference materials for specialised knowledge are almost non-existent; iii) lectures and learning materials for online training have not been systematically developed.

Under the impact of the fourth scientific and technological revolution, along with the transformation of the economy, society, and other fields, education-training is facing unprecedented challenges. To meet the requirements of reality and gradually integrate with international education, the blended learning model has been researched and applied in recent years, mainly at the university level. We believe that, with Vietnamese studies, building a blended teaching model will create essential advantages and overcome difficulties in the initial language, economic, and cultural barriers for foreigners and contribute to promoting learning activities and creating better learning motivation, thereby forming skills and flexible thinking - an essential requirement for students of Vietnamese studies. In the context of the current COVID-19 impact, building a blended teaching model for Vietnamese studies will undoubtedly play an essential part in promoting training cooperation with foreign countries. Therefore, textbooks, teaching materials, and electronic lesson plans can be considered gaps that need appropriate investment in the current context.

6.5. Teaching staff

As the most critical factor determining the quality of education, the teacher has the role of orienting and guiding students to grasp knowledge and shape their personality and ideology. Being a new major in Vietnam, the current teaching staff of Vietnamese studies in training institutions can be considered the second generation after the founding generation, so they are a younger generation, both in professional career and seniority. Advantageously, they have been exposed to modern and up-to-date education in the current context of rapid educational integration, and they directly participate in developing or updating training programs after Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW dated November 4th, 2013, of the 8th Plenum of the 11th Party Congress on fundamental and comprehensive innovation in education and training. However, there is a big challenge regarding significant knowledge and training organization experience because lecturers teaching Vietnamese studies require integrated thinking and highly practical experience. Therefore, developing

the teaching staff of Vietnamese studies is an important issue that needs attention. The teaching staff of Vietnamese studies is mainly recruited from language, geography, history fields. The essential requirement of the major is to expand knowledge in an interdisciplinary direction; however, lecturers-mostly young lecturers from specialized majors-are facing the challenge of pursuing their professional careers to meet the requirements for consideration and recognition of professors and associate professors titles. Meanwhile, Vietnamese studies is currently not enlisted to consider professor and associate professor titles in the State Council of Professors⁷. Therefore, improving human resources is one of the most urgent requirements of the major with specific jobs including i) having a specific mechanism in assigning topics for training development; ii) considering including Vietnamese studies in the list for consideration of professor and associate professor titles; iii) create a specific mechanism for lecturers to have conditions to expand cooperation with external parties such as improving their ability to use foreign languages and participating in national and international conferences.

7. Conclusions

As an independent science, Vietnamese studies, like other majors, needs to have its own knowledge system, training objectives, and training programs that meet the mission and output standards. It would be ideal if this major is based on knowledge of history, literature, and ideology of Vietnam, especially the features that have been summarised in the historical process of the nation. At the same time, this major should have identified unique characteristics from the concept to the knowledge system to be achieved, as well as research methods and training organizations. Through the above analysis and discussion, we see that a new era is opening with many opportunities and challenges for training in Vietnamese studies. We

⁷State Council for Professorship (2021), *Decision No 26/QĐ-HDGSNN Dated November 8, 2021 of The Chairman of The State Council for Professorship on The List of Accredited Journals of Science in 2021* (in Vietnamese).

believe in its development, especially if existing problems are resolved quickly and appropriately. Modernizing the program by carefully selecting investment policies to develop the team, connect and expand the global Vietnamese studies network, and using overseas Vietnamese to spread the image of Vietnam to the world, are the can-be-done activities if there are support policies from the state management, relevant ministries, and agencies.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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