

The Impact Of Multilingual Policies Towards Socio-Economic Development In Vietnam

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Abstract

The purpose of this mixed-method study was to understand the impact of multilingual policies at University of Foreign Language Studies, the University of Danang, Vietnam towards socio-economic development in the middle area of Vietnam. The study examined a large number of university graduates in different times and employers to investigate the contribution of this policy thanks to the training of the University. Data collected from surveys and interviews were analysed to unpack the employment situation, the suitability of the training curriculum towards alumni' careers, levels of satisfaction related to knowledge and skills that employers rate for alumni's work performance. The results indicated that alumni of different foreign languages from this university could do different kinds of jobs and most employers highly appreciate their work performance. The study also suggested recommendations to better the situation.

Keywords: alumni, multilingual policy, language, employers, satisfaction

1. Introduction

Based on the position, needs and role of foreign languages in the cause of national construction and development, the Party and government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam has adopted a multilingual policy in the national system. During the period from 1945 to 1968, four languages including English, French, Chinese and Russian were emphasized in the national education system. In 1994, English was considered the main foreign language in teaching, but other foreign languages have always been maintained and developed in teaching and learning. The purpose of learning foreign languages in Vietnam has always been for rapid integration with the world economy effectively. In this

respect, foreign languages are considered effective tool and means in the process of integration and development. However, it's not all about English, we need to pay attention to language diversity as Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet's directive 42TTg pointed out in 1994. National Foreign Language Project (2020) also focuses on linguistic diversity through texts that emphasizes the importance of English and the role of other foreign languages. However, since the Project was implemented until now, all efforts have been focused on English.

In Vietnam today, in economic and trade relations, the proportion is not completely inclined to the English-speaking bloc, but our country has very good trade with European and Asian countries. Moreover, another economic

strength brought about by labor export is not small. And thanks to the diversity of languages, workers can be equipped with the right language to work abroad. Another economic sector that brings great income to the country is tourism. Among foreign tourists to Vietnam, only one-third speak English as their mother tongue. The remaining guests come from many different countries, mainly Chinese, Japanese, European, Korean, etc.

Another equally important aspect is the military. In this respect, Russian plays an extremely important role because Russian is closely related to military technology.

In short, in line with Vietnam's socio-economic development orientation towards globalization and international integration, the education sector of Vietnam must persist in implementing the policy of diversifying the foreign languages to be taught and learning in all kinds of schools and for all kinds of subjects. This study is aimed at understanding the impact of multilingual policies at University of Foreign Language Studies, the University of Danang, Vietnam towards socio-economic development in the middle area of Vietnam and also suggests some solutions to better the situation.

Review of Literature

2.1. Language Policy

Research on language choice at universities is intended to contribute to a picture of global socio-economic trends in different periods. According to Heller (2003), the globalizing economy is related to the transformation of the roles of languages in many different aspects. Therefore, it can be recognized that the development of language policy is related to changes in society, and language policy is also considered a type of social policy (Dannis, 1999).

2.2. Multilingual policy

Multilingual policy refers to the policy in the area of language use of a society. These policies reflect social relationships with the languages that can be used, including policies on roles and principles to be followed within a country (Van & La, 2012). Language is used as a means of communication and exchange of information as well as knowledge. Throughout the history of human development, many different languages have always prevailed in scientific research as well as communication in the world (Graddol, 1997). In the world, there are many countries that apply a multilingual policy to meet the needs of society. In Singapore, linguistic diversity is becoming more and more popular with languages such as Chinese, English, Malay, Tamil (Nguyen, 2018).

Also according to Nguyen (2018), Singapore's multilingual policy has two main points of view: (i) Internationalization: This view requires adopting a non-native language as an official language. The Singapore government has approved the use of English in addition to the native language of Singapore. (ii) Multilingualism: Requires recognition and support of the coexistence of multiple languages in society. For China, a multi-ethnic and multilingual country, language policy in China has demonstrated a combination of diversity and unity clearly because the constitution of the People's Republic of China clearly stipulates, 'All ethnic groups have the right to freely use and develop their mother tongue' and 'The Government widely disseminates the common Mandarin language throughout the country.' (Van & La, 2012). In fact, China is investing heavily in building infrastructure and strengthening trade links with countries along the 'Silk Road' in the Asian continent as well as the 'Silk Road' at sea', where languages other than English, such as Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Russia and Urdu,

are more likely to be spoken. China's practice of multilingualism has improved rapidly with specific numbers. In 2012 China had the largest number of Japanese learners (1,046 million out of 3,985 million Japanese learners worldwide), an increase of 26.5% since 2009 (Gao and Zheng, 2019).

Beside China as analyzed above, many countries have been paying attention to language diversity. These include countries such as Korea, Japan, Singapore or New Zealand. In Europe, language policy is also built on the diversity principle. In addition to English, influential languages such as French, German, and Spanish are encouraged to be taught in the school system and used in the community. In Europe and America, language policy is based on the principle of diversity (Porter, 2006). In the Asia-Pacific region, multilingualism is very common with many different languages being used in the workplace, school and society (Baldauf and Nguyen, 2012).

In the context of increasingly multilingual policies in many areas, according to Coulmas (2005), the trend of language selection at training institutions which is still mostly English, besides some other languages, also gradually gains more and more selective advantages. In the research results of this article, it can be seen that besides the sustainable popularity of English in the choice of learners over the years, Japanese, Korean, and Chinese languages, along with other languages, have become increasingly popular and more selective than before. This is also a very interesting multilingual trend shift.

2.3. Multilingual practice in Vietnam

The policy of multilingual teaching in Vietnamese education system was determined very early on the basis of the connection of economic and social cooperation with countries around the world. During the period

from 1945 to 1968, four languages including English, French, Chinese and Russian were taught in the national education system. In 1994, English was considered the main foreign language in teaching, but other foreign languages have always been maintained and developed in teaching and learning. The purpose of foreign language learning in Vietnam has always been to train human resources proficient in foreign languages so that Vietnam can quickly integrate with the world economy effectively. In this respect, foreign languages are considered an effective and key tool in the process of integration and development.

It can be seen that Vietnam's policy of language diversity is reflected in many documents, such as Directive 42/TTG by Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet in 1994 on enhancing foreign language training for civil servants, Decision 1800 issued in 2008 by Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung approving the National Foreign Language Project (NFL) until 2020, and Decision 2080 in 2017 by Deputy Prime Minister Vu Duc Dam on approving additional amendments to the National Foreign Language Project.

The NFL focuses on language diversity through targets and implementation solutions for foreign languages. However, since the project was implemented until now, implementation activities still focus mainly on teaching English.

In Vietnam today, in the relationship of multilateral economic and trade cooperation, the proportion of cooperation is not completely tilted towards the English-speaking countries. Our country also has very good trade with European countries, Asia and other continents. Thanks to the policy and practice of language diversity, Vietnamese workers are equipped with many suitable languages to be able to work abroad. Besides labor export, another economic sector that brings great income to the

country is tourism. Among foreign tourists coming to Vietnam, only one third of them use English as their native language. The remaining guests come from many different countries, mainly from China, Japan, Europe, Korea and recently Russia, etc.

2.4. Academic Training in terms of Multilingual Policies at University of Foreign Language Studies, the University of Danang, Vietnam

The training program at the University of Foreign Language Studies - the University of Danang (UFLS-UD) clearly shows: training level; training subjects, admission conditions and graduation conditions; training objectives, standards of knowledge and skills of learners upon graduation; volume of theoretical, practical and practical knowledge; training plan according to the design time; training methods and forms; how to evaluate learning results; program execution conditions. Each program is associated with a single discipline (single major) or several disciplines (dualistic model) and is structured from modules in two blocks of knowledge: general education and professional education. The Rector promulgates the training program implemented in the University, with the volume of each program not less than 120 credits for a 4-year university course; no less than 60 credits for a regular university course.

Based on the amount of knowledge of the training programs, the Rector of the university shall prescribe the allocation of the number of courses and other activities for each school year and each semester. Based on the results of the entrance exam and the candidate's desire to register for the exam, the university arranges the candidates to enter the correct training major for which they have registered for the exam.

At the present time, there are nearly 6,000 students studying 7 different languages at UFLS-UD. UFLS-UD has the function of

training teachers and linguists with undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in some common languages in the world, conducting scientific research and performing social services in the fields of science and technology, language and culture, and at the same time teaching foreign languages to member higher education institutions and units affiliated to the University of Danang.

For undergraduate level, the University is currently training 13 majors and 21 specializations, including foreign languages such as English, French, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Thai. The school has also been training BA in Vietnamese language and Vietnamese culture for foreigners since 2006. The school has a tradition of training bachelors in English, French, and Russian pedagogy since its inception and for many years, the School has specialized in English Pedagogy at primary level and Chinese Pedagogy.

In order to meet the needs of human resources of the society and diversify the fields and majors of training, the University of Foreign Languages Studies - UD has conducted bachelor's degree programs in French for tourism, English for tourism, and English for tourism. Business English, Tourist English, Business Chinese, Tourist Chinese; majors in International Studies, Oriental Studies, Vietnamese Language and Vietnamese Culture.

3. Methods

University of Foreign Language Studies (UFLS) is one of the member educational institutions of UD, currently training 07 foreign languages at university level including English, Russian, French, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai and Vietnamese as a foreign language for foreigners. In the general structure of training scale, English has accounted for the highest enrollment rate for many years. However, it can be seen that more

and more high school students are interested in and choosing other foreign languages with recent trends such as Korean, Japanese, and Chinese as their majors.

The methodology selected for this study is case study, which refers to an empirical inquiry developing an in-depth understanding of a real-life phenomenon (Yin, 2009). In case study, the researcher seeks to develop an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of the case by collecting multiple forms of data (Creswell, 2012). Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) hold the viewpoint that in a research, the situations are changing all the time instead of keeping fixed

and they are all affected by the. Also, according to these authors, with the help of case studies, researchers could observe effects in real contexts; henceforth, context is a powerful determinant of cause and effects as well (Cohen et al., 2011). In this case study, the study was built up on a combination of different sources of qualitative and quantitative data including participants' survey and participants' interviews from nearly alumni in 2020 and 2021 and 40 employers in the Middle Area of Vietnam.

4. Findings

Through the survey and interviews, the findings are as follows.

Employment situation

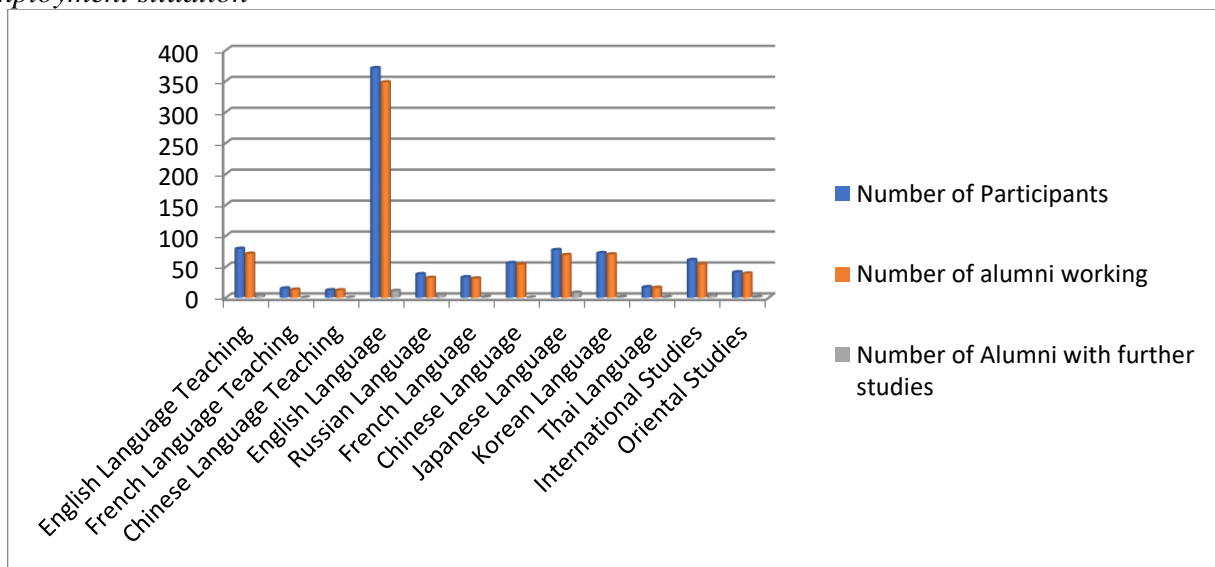


Table 1: Alumni's Employment Situation

The survey results (for 872 survey responses) show that the majority of graduates (97%) have had jobs or continued for further studies, only 3% are unemployed. The highest employment rate is in the Language Teaching of Chinese, Japanese, Thai, and Korean languages (99 - 100%); The lowest is French Language Teaching (87%).

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Employment Area

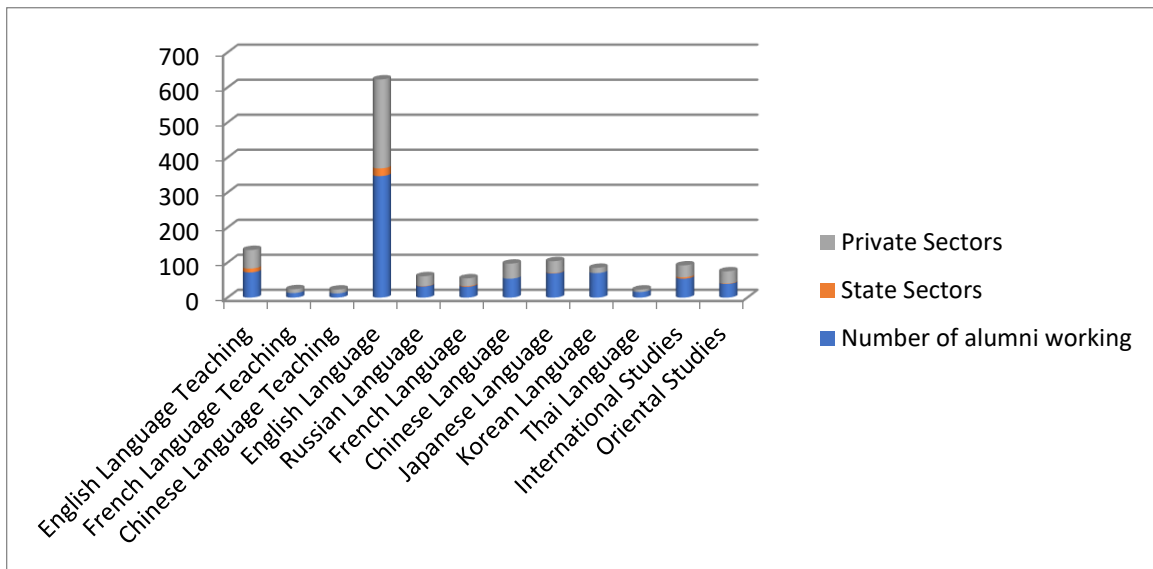


Table 2: Alumni's Employment Area

The survey results show that among the alumni who have a job, the majority (68%) work in the private sector, followed by the foreign sector

(25%), the few remaining work in the public sector (5%) or are self-employed (2%).

Average monthly income of alumni with jobs

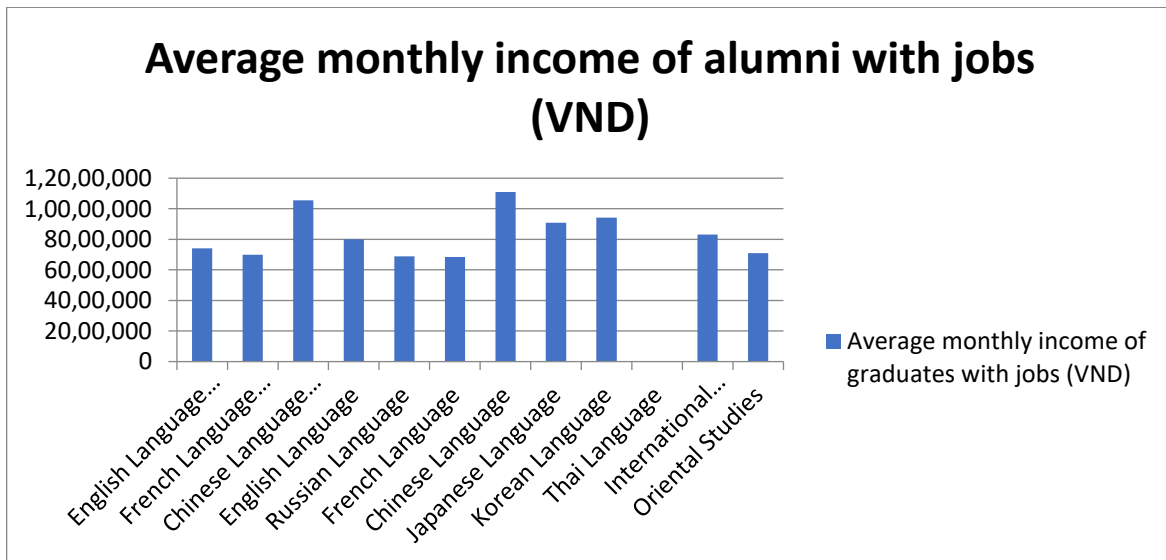


Table 3: Average monthly income of alumni with jobs

The survey results show that the majority (97%) of the University's alumni have jobs with stable incomes or are continuing their graduate studies. This positive result proves the educational quality of the University as well as the ability of alumni to participate in the labor market after graduation.

On the other hand, the collection of data from employers has also shown the level of satisfaction with the quality of language training at UFLS-UD. In fact, through interviews and surveys, up to 95% of employers including schools, companies, organizations... agree that graduates from the

University are fully equipped with knowledge and skills for the job. Moreover, 84% of employers highly appreciate the skills of graduates from UFLS-UD, applying

knowledge and adapting to work. This is shown more clearly in Table 4, data on enterprises' comments on the employability of alumni from UFLS-UD.

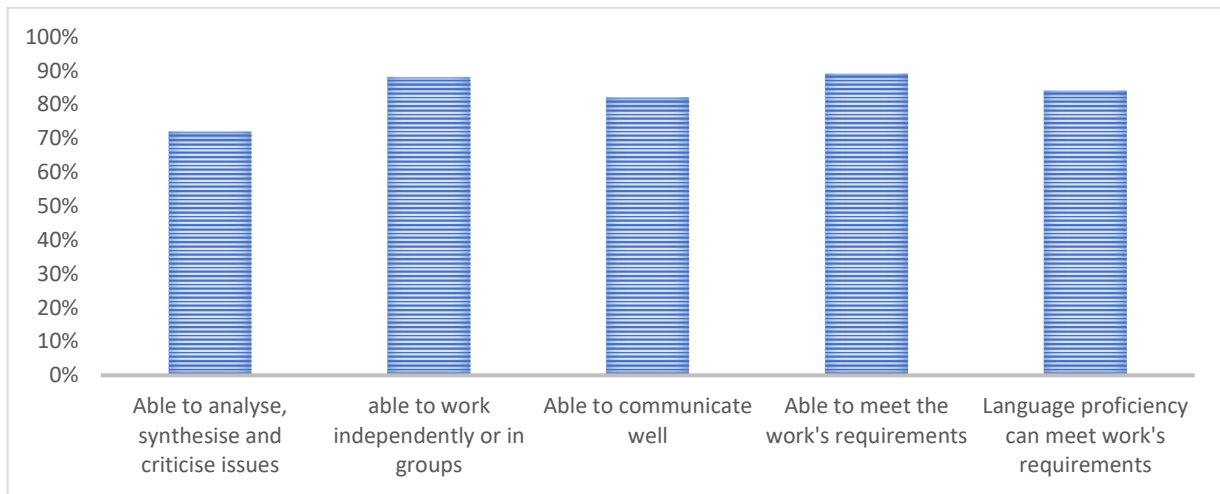


Table 4: data on enterprises' comments on the employability of alumni from UFLS-UD.

From the data in Table 4, we can see that businesses highly value the working abilities of alumni from the University, including the ability to criticize, analyze and synthesize, and the ability to work independently. as well as coordination, good communication ability, skills to respond well to job requirements and

the language proficiency.

To learn more about the response of training activities to recruitment by enterprises through interviews and surveys, the data has been collected in Table 5.

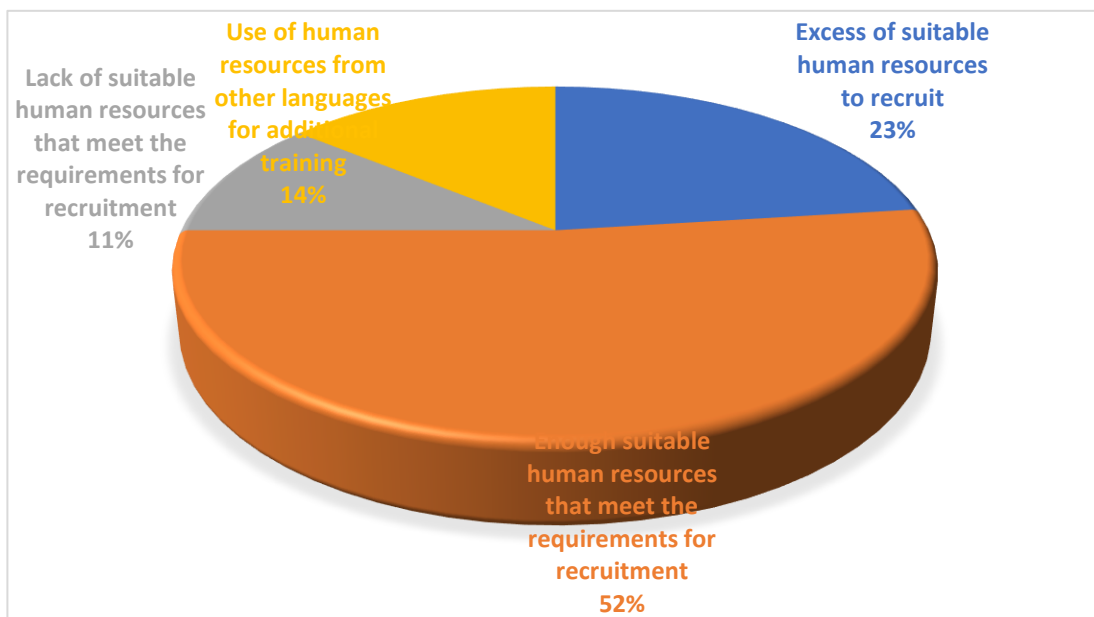


Table 5: Survey on recruitment needs of students at UFLS-UD

Thus, it can be seen that a relatively large proportion of the trained human resources of UFLS-UD can meet the recruitment needs of enterprises. Particularly, 11% of employers said that the shortage of suitable human resources for recruitment is in the highly specialized group of professionals and requires quite excellent human resources.

With a labor force spread in the central provinces and the Central Highlands, the human resources trained by UFLS-UD has contributed significantly to all areas of life and in parallel with promoting the development in all aspects of society in this region. Table 6 provides the number of workers in local occupations as well as an assessment of the job completion of that human resource by enterprises.

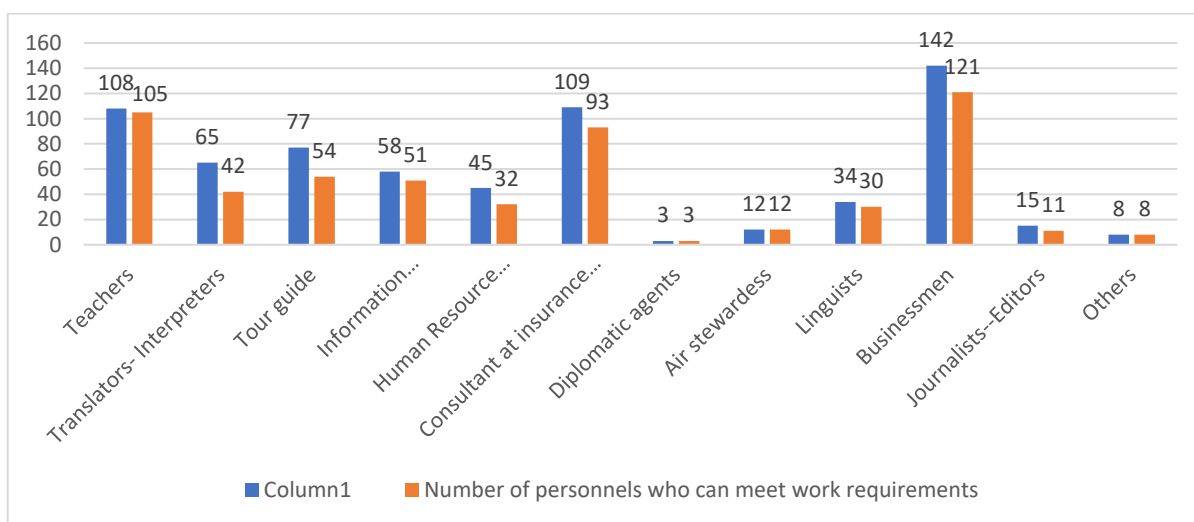


Table 6: Human resources participate in local working fields and the number of human resources meets the requirements of the businesses

Through surveys and interviews with enterprises about local labor force, graduates from UFLS-UD have participated in a variety of local professions: teachers, translators- interpreters, tour guides, information technology, human resource managers, corporate consultant, diplomat, air stewardess, linguists, businessmen and related fields, journalists and editors. The field of study that students participate in the most is economics, followed by teaching and consulting. The profession that students rarely participate in is diplomacy. In addition, the number of students participating as tour guides has decreased significantly. This can be explained by the prolonged Covid epidemic, which seriously affected the tourism industry in the world and Vietnam. It is a good sign that businesses

appreciate students' work capacity and skills to meet job requirements.

5. Discussion and Implications

From the collected data and analysis results mentioned above, the following solutions will be proposed by this study.

- Determining human resource training needs is the first step to focus on in construction management and training program development.
- Determining human resource demand in terms of industry size, number of learners at all levels of training in the Middle and Highland region. Based on the forecast of human resource needs at the national level, the central level and the Central Highlands region and based on the training program

development goals and plans of the University as forecasted in the strategic plan of the University. It is necessary to organize a survey of the needs of the size of the profession, the number of employees corresponding to the training levels of the employers' organizations and agencies by the time the students graduate. On that basis, it is essential to identify training disciplines that need to be developed new training programs as well as maintaining existing training disciplines need to continue to evaluate and improve training programs.

- The specific training objectives of the training programs must meet the professional requirements of the society, and at the same time must be suitable to the circumstances and conditions of the University as well as the situation in the Middle - Central Highlands region.
- The development of training objectives must also ensure flexibility, allowing students to easily change majors in the learning process when necessary. Training objectives must be regularly reviewed, supplemented, adjusted and implemented.
- It is necessary to develop a plan to periodically compare and contrast the goals with the achieved results in order to comprehensively evaluate training activities, find out strengths and weaknesses, and take measures to improve training quality.
- The training program must have clear and specific goals with a reasonable structure. It must be systematically designed, meet the requirements and output standards in the direction of capacity development for students and meet the appropriate requirements. meeting the demand for

quality human resources of the training disciplines serving the socio-economic development of the Middle - Central Highlands region.

6. Conclusion

UFLS-UD with its history of establishment and development has contributed significantly to the socio-economic development of the locality as well as the provinces in the Middle and Central Highlands regions. From a small school with only 03 languages initially trained: English, French, Russian, the University has continuously developed new majors and specialties to meet the constantly developing needs of society. With the current digital transformation context along with a continuously developing society, universities must have a high capacity to respond effectively and quickly to social needs as required by the modern knowledge economy.

In order to deploy effectively, the quality of training programs in the direction of autonomy to ensure that graduates can meet the increasing requirements of the domestic and foreign labor market must be ensured. This study has also shown that the University needs to have a strategy to periodically adjust the structure of undergraduate and graduate training disciplines in the direction of expanding and/or building a number of new training programs in the field of foreign languages. language. At the same time, the University also needs to expand the scale of university training, diversify training types and training methods, and provide short-term training courses on foreign language skills, translation and interpretation skills, teaching methods, and teaching and developing professional capacity of foreign language teachers, etc., in order to better meet social needs and socio-economic development in the new period.

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