

Developing Graduate Knowledge and Skills for the World of Work: The Case of the Translation Curriculum in Vietnam

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Abstract

National and global challenges have given rise to the need to prepare Vietnamese graduates for effective adaptation to the increasingly changing professional field, their community, their society and the globalised world. The tertiary education curriculum thus needs to take into account the employment market, socio-cultural demands and students' individual needs in order to develop highly educated populations for the world of work and for the current knowledge economy. Based on a case study of the translation curriculum in a B.A. (Bachelors of Arts) language program, this paper addresses the mismatch between the demands of the translation employment market and the curriculum within the context of Vietnamese tertiary education. It raises a number of important issues related to the tensions between the centralised curriculum, learner-centred education, the actual demands of the employment market as well as the issue of capacity building in response to the socialist-oriented market economy and the changing workplace context in Vietnam. Implications are drawn not only for the translation curriculum, but also for the reform of the Vietnamese tertiary education curriculum as a whole, in order to enhance graduate employability.

Key words: *Graduate knowledge and skills, translation program, curriculum design, Vietnam*

Introduction

In recent years, the need to equip students with graduate knowledge, skills and attributes in response to the socialist-oriented market economy, changing society, modernisation and global challenges has been a growing concern for Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). This has challenged the conventional principles underpinning the tertiary education curriculum in Vietnam. Yet, at the same time, it gives rise to the opportunities to rethink what constitutes quality tertiary education in the contemporary context of Vietnam and to move towards a more responsive curriculum and effective pedagogy. Teaching and learning initiatives which support the development of employability skills contribute to preparing graduates for the demand to compete and perform effectively in national and global knowledge economies.

This paper examines the issues related to the development of graduate knowledge, skills and attributes for the translation employment market in Vietnam. It draws on a case study of the translation curriculum in a B.A. language program to analyse the mismatch between the demands of the translation employment market and the translation curriculum and pedagogic practices. The paper raises a number of important issues related to the tensions between the centralised and controlled curriculum, learner-centred education, the demands of a professional life as a translator as well as the issue of capacity building in response to the socialist-oriented market economy and the changing employment structures Vietnam. The paper begins with a discussion of the broader picture of the development of knowledge, skills and attributes in Vietnam's tertiary education. The growing demand

for translation in the global and national context will then be addressed. This will be followed by the analysis of the

translation curriculum and the discussion of to what extent the present curriculum addresses the issue of professional readiness for language students within a market economy and a global age. Finally, some pedagogical implications not only for the translation curriculum but also for reform of the tertiary education curriculum as a whole in Vietnam will be identified and explored in order to enhance general graduate employability.

Development of graduate knowledge and skills for the employment market in Vietnam

Modernisation and national and global challenges foster the need to develop graduates who are capable to effectively engage in and adapt to the increasingly changing professional field, their community, their society and their nation. In particular, it is crucial for the tertiary education curriculum to take into account the employment market, social demands and the students' individual needs in order to develop an educated workforce that can respond to the need for national development. Yet, how to balance community needs, business needs, employability demands and individual needs in curriculum design is a critical question for Vietnamese tertiary education. Moreover these dimensions of needs are often intertwined. For example, learners' needs can be multiple and appear to be to a certain degree re-shaped by the employment market, the society and the learning environment with which they interact.

In 1986, the Vietnamese government initiated *Đổi Mới* or Economic Reform to move from a centrally-planned socialist economy to a socialist-oriented market economy. *Đổi Mới* aims to develop a multi-sectoral market economy under the state management in the socialist orientation. Even though *Đổi Mới* has been regarded as a practical response of the Vietnamese government to the contemporary context of Vietnam and modern economy, Vietnamese tertiary education has been criticised to be out of tune with the demands of the market economy, the world of work, the society and the globalised world (Chiến lược phát triển giáo dục Việt Nam, 2008). Moreover, it has been argued that the reform of tertiary education in Vietnam needs to take into account graduates' employability as an important mission (Nguyen, 2012). The translation curriculum should not be an exception.

There emerges a paradox regarding the employment market in Vietnam. At the moment, Vietnam is facing severe skills shortage in various service sectors including finance, banking, business and tourism (OECD, 2012). Yet, according to OECD (2012), up to 60% of Vietnamese graduates are unable to secure employment and of those who are employed, many do not work in areas of their major or need to be re-trained. This happens because many employers still find it difficult to find graduates with the knowledge, skills and attributes required for their workplace. Coupled with professional knowledge, the development of employability and life skills and attributes are integral for graduates' capacity to stay employed and for their effective transition into the world of work. However, these aspects have not yet been accorded sufficient emphasis in a wide range of tertiary education programs in Vietnam, including the translation program.

Given the impacts of globalisation, westernisation, commercialisation and the market economy, there is a critical need to take students beyond mere instrumentalism where learning outcomes are subject to individuals' pragmatic orientations and viewed in economic terms (Levin, 2000, p. 21). On the other hand, a curriculum that is centred on mere academic achievement, theory-oriented and scholastically driven only is no longer sufficient given Vietnam's current economic developments, issues of skill shortages and unemployment, pre-employment and post-employment education and training and the need to develop Vietnam in the global context. Though employers may not be the only judges of employability skills (Hager & Holland, 2006), a curriculum that is isolated from the employment market and employers' needs is associated with low-level commitment to skills development in Vietnamese tertiary education (Tran & Swierczek, 2009). Tran and Swierczek further argue 'developing skills in universities is not only shortcoming, but also mismatching employer needs. While employers prioritize learning, communication, information processing, problem solving, and interpersonal skills, lecturers lay their focus on decision-making, learning, and information processing skills to solve problems' (2009, p. 580). The changing employment market is characterised by cross-sectoral employment mobility which fosters more diverse, fluid and flexible career paths for graduates. Global forces, the market economy and its associated features including the changing employment structure require

Vietnamese tertiary education to develop graduates' capacity to oversee changes, think creatively and effectively adapt to the competing demands of the workplace as well as different social settings. In relation to translation education and training, it is critical for the curriculum to enable prospective translators to develop the capacity to foster lifelong learning, search for new knowledge and techniques needed for their profession, flexibly navigate and apply both theoretical and practical knowledge to different professional contexts and to be responsive to changes.

The present centralised and controlled tertiary education system and the lack of autonomy are amongst the factors that hinder the flexibility of Vietnamese institutes and their responsiveness to workplace needs, changing economy's demands and learners' multiple expectations. Vietnam's current tertiary education sector is characterised by the inflexible control of the government and the central ministry – the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) (Hayden, 2005). The autonomy to establish connections with employers, industries and workplaces in order to better understand their practices and demands and incorporate such understandings into curriculum design is vital for the reform of tertiary education in Vietnam.

Integrating employability skills into the curriculum is a necessary step to make the curriculum more learner-centred and responsive to the professional world that tertiary students will soon engage in. Although some efforts have been made to reform the educational system, it is still common practice in Vietnam that learners at all educational levels have learnt to passively accept the knowledge imparted by the teacher and from textbooks rather than engaging critically with emergent theories and skills that are key to their future professional practices. The need to demonstrate compliance to the centralised curriculum and prepare students for examinations which often focus on testing the knowledge transferred to students from the teacher and textbooks seem to be a constraint for the renovation of tertiary education curriculum, including the translation curriculum. Students' learning needs, including needs related to their professional readiness, which are at the heart of a responsive and learner-centred education (Jones, 2005), are compromised at the expense of the pressure for teachers to conform to the fixed requirements of the curriculum they are teaching.

The global translation market

Over the last decade, the global translation market has seen a staggering growth. Commercial initiatives have now gone beyond geopolitical boundaries, and for competition and survival, any company wishing to be successful in the marketplace must cross borders and advertise its products abroad and participate in international trade. As international communication has grown, translation has become vitally important to companies in industry, commerce, education, tourism and so on. The volume of documents that need to be translated to reach target groups beyond national borders has multiplied manifold (Olvera-Lobo et al. 2005). According to Common Sense Advisory an American market research company, the global translation market brought about USD 14.25 billion in 2008, and is estimated to increase to USD 14.25 billion in 2013, an 10.8 % increase in the 5 year interim (Beninatto, Renato, & Kelly, 2009). The identified translation market is commonly that of the technical and business translation such as legal translation, commercial translation, financial translation, subtitling, multimedia translation, and website localization. At present, there are about 25,000 translation and interpretation companies in over 152 countries (Beninatto, Renato, & Kelly, 2009). The increasing migration trends have also created a strong demand for translation, especially in countries such as America, Canada, Australia and some European countries. In sum, the billion dollar figure in the translation industry is the result of globalization, tourism, migration, and in particular, the expansion of international business, in both the private and government sectors.

It should also be noted that the translation market has now become decentralized. This is a factor that shapes a new direction for translator training and education. As a result of new technologies and the increasingly blurred economic borders, the translation services that a company, an organization, or a client requires are usually not confined by geographical boundaries. That means that physical distance is no obstacle to the successful completion of a translation assignment. Global translation websites such as ProZ.com and Translatorscafe.com enable translators from any part of the globe to market their services globally and win jobs from international translation companies. Translators based in Vietnam, for example, can launch their profiles through these websites, to bid for and receive jobs from companies or clients based in London and New York. This phenomenon is advantageous as it expands the field of the profession, but at the same time, it poses many challenges for translators, who find it ever more difficult to define their specialization, their resources and, ultimately, their training (Olvera-Lobo et al., 2005). In the end, all translators are competing with other

translators from all over the world (Olvera-Lobo et al., 2005). Therefore, professional readiness for a trans-national and cross-cultural employment market is a dimension that needs to be accorded critical emphasis in designing the translation curriculum in a global age.

With the advancement of technology, the translation market has thus become more demanding than ever before, and this is also a factor for consideration in the development of the translation curriculum. In the modern translation market, few translations can be done without Computer Assisted Translation (CAT) tools. The nature of such tools is to help translators speed up their work and maintain consistency through a translation memory (TM). It is obvious that the technological tools and utilities available can make some translation work easier to translators. However, these resources require translators to receive more training. They need to learn to familiarize themselves with the most common tools, if not all. In many cases, translators need to obey the rules set by clients in terms the computer tools clients want to use, as well as the resources they prefer. In the professional settings, the subject matters of source texts are, in principle, infinite; and the computer tools necessary for developing translation work can be quite varied. Translators thus always need to update their tools and resources to compete in the translator market (Olvera-Lobo et al., 2005).

The translation curriculum in Vietnam as a case study

Growing demand for translation in Vietnam

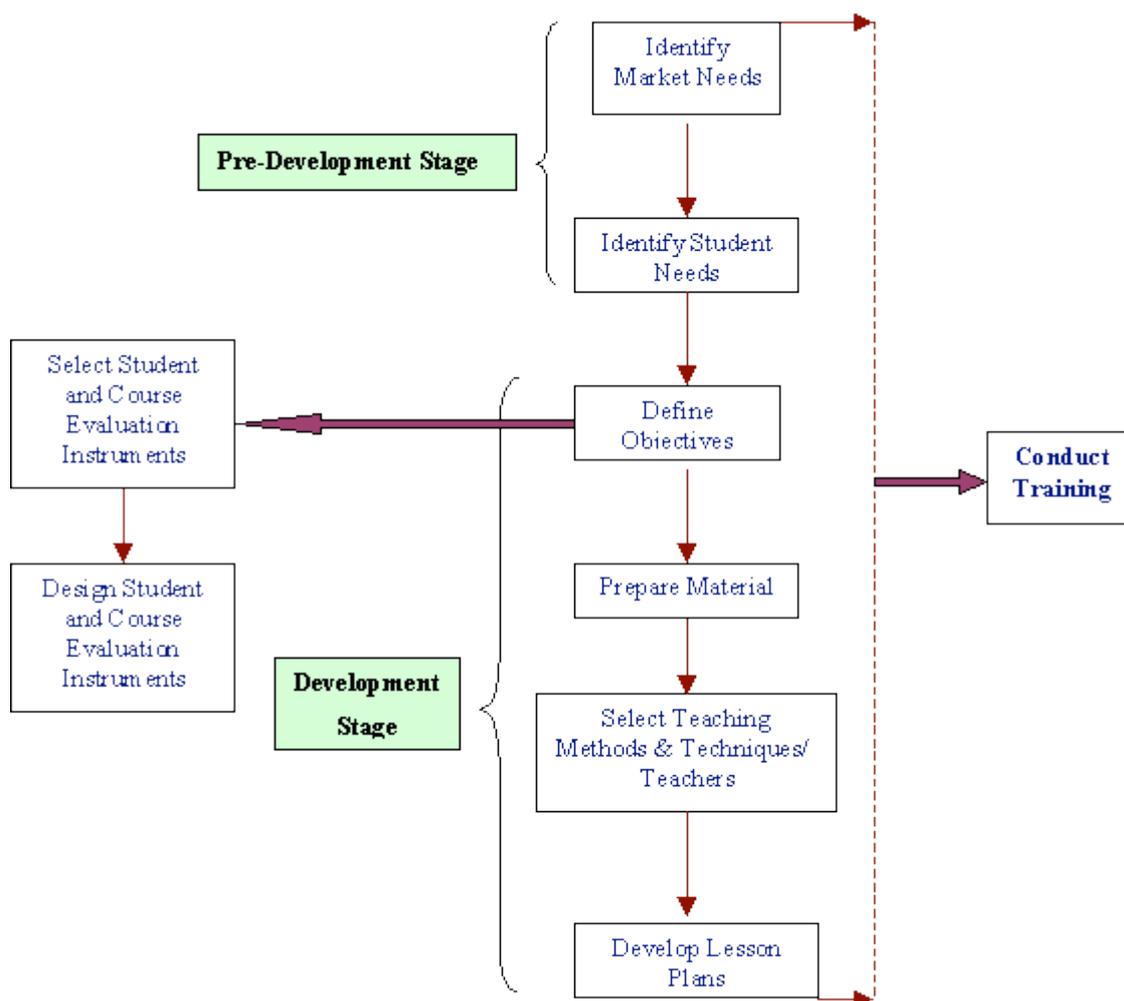
The Vietnamese government's open door policy and the transition to the socialist-oriented market economy have been accompanied by a rapid increase in the number of private, joint venture and foreign direct investment (FDI) enterprises, increasing exports and imports, the growth of international trade, the broadening of international ties and the growth of mass media and the internet. In particular, according to Mori, Pham and Nguyen (2010), the total value of approved FDI projects in Vietnam was US\$ 71.7 billion in 2008, which is more than three times that in 2007, US\$ 21.3 billion. The national and global forces have created the demand for professional translation and this trend is expected to continue to grow in the next couple of decades. A quick search in Vietnamworks.com, the biggest employment website in Vietnam, shows that the demand for translation jobs is usually three or four times higher than the demand for language teaching jobs (Pham Hoa Hiep & Ton Nu Nhu Huong, 2009). Professional translators are indeed encountering competing needs and an increasingly complex professional environment in which personal expectations, disciplinary conventions, cultural norms, national standards and possibly trans-national markets intersect. Furthermore, the world of professional translation involves highly interconnected, intercultural, interpersonal and interdisciplinary contexts in which graduates will probably find themselves. Therefore the translation program in the tertiary education sector is a relevant and interesting case study that can reveal the interface between what the employment market demands and how students are prepared to participate in this professional world.

The translation curriculum at the tertiary education level in Vietnam

It is widely observed that translators have been often trained in an informal way, which lacks both clearly-defined curricula and proper training methodology (Pym, 1998; Garb, 2001). For example, Caminade and Pym (1998) remark:

Translators ... have been trained informally, basically through trial and error, unstructured apprenticeship arrangements, or any of the various translating activities that accompany the study of a foreign language and culture within the Liberal Arts tradition. (Caminade & Pym 1998, p. 280)

Designing a translation program that benefits future translators is deemed important. However, this task requires careful planning and development. Garb (2001) posits that the development of a translator training program, like any other programs, should follow a systematic cycle, or specific steps that represent the bones that make up the skeleton of the design and development process. Garb (2001) illustrates the bones of the skeleton of an integrated translation program's design and development as follows (Figure 1):



Cycle of Translation Program Design and Development (Gabr 2000, 17)

Figure 1: Cycle of translation program design and development

Gabr's framework above is inspired by a professional approach to translation. The first step is to identify market needs, and this is followed by identification of the students' needs.

In Vietnam, as well as in many other Asian countries, translator training and education has not received adequate attention. Translation courses are often offered as part of most degree programs in a foreign language such as English. Within the traditional model, students receive unsystematic translation training based on trial-and-error methods, arbitrary teaching points and hand-on-experience. Translation activities are mainly linked with foreign language acquisition, or the study of a foreign language and culture (Caminade & Pym, 1998). Despite this, in recent years attempts have been made to move from a traditional training approach that focuses on purely linguistic aspects to a more professionally-grounded approach aiming to equip learners with professional skills that are useful for their future jobs as translators. For example, at Hue College of Foreign Languages, where the first named author of this paper is based, the following components are focused in the B.A. program for students majoring in translation:

- Language development (English and Vietnamese)
- Knowledge about the culture of English speaking countries and cross-cultural communication
- Specialized knowledge
- IT knowledge (on-line dictionaries/resources, CAT tools, software...)
- Communication skills and ethics

In phrase 1 of the program (the first two years), students are required to take subjects which aim to develop English and Vietnamese language skills, cultural knowledge and cross cultural communication skills. Phrase 2 of the program (the last two years) is designed with the aim to intensively develop professional skills. Subjects offered at phrase 2 range from introduction to translation (basic translation theories and basic knowledge about translation industry) to developing basic translation skills (such as reading comprehension and text analysis), specialised translation practices, knowledge of computer assisted translation tools, and ethics and translation business skills (Table 1).

Table 1: *Contents covered in Phase 2 in the Translation Program at Hue College of Foreign Language, Vietnam (Extract from Revised BA Curriculum in English, Hue College of Foreign Languages, 2009)*

| Code | Translation Major | Number of Credits |
|-----------|---|-------------------|
| | Name of Subject | |
| A.II.2.1 | Introduction to Translation and Interpretation | 2 |
| A.II.2.2 | Basic skills for Translation & Interpretation | 4 |
| A.II.2.3 | Translation Practice 1 (General/Everyday Topics) | 4 |
| A.II.2.4 | Translation Practice 2 (General Business/Economy) | 4 |
| A.II.2.5 | Translation Practice 3 (Education/ Pedagogy Literacy) | 4 |
| A.II.2.6 | Translation Practice 4 (Tourism/ Travel/Environment) | 4 |
| A.II.2.7 | Translation Practice 5 (Administration/ Governance Development/ International Organization) | 4 |
| A.II.2.8 | Computer Assisted Translation Tools_ Wordfast, Trados...) and on line Resources | 3 |
| A.II.2.9 | Ethics and Business Skills in Translation | 2 |
| A.II.2.10 | Independent Project | 3 |
| A.II.2.11 | Practicum | 5 |

In theory, this program has a relatively clear aim and seems to cover almost everything concerning the preparation for the training of translators as Gabr (2001) puts forward. However, in reality, there are problems at the level of implementation since the program lacks tools for the selection of students and course evaluation instruments. At the moment all students in the B.A. language program can choose to major in translation. Also, there is no systematic mechanism to evaluate if the program is at present actually taking into account the translation employment market and students' needs.

Recent research by Doan Thanh Tuan (2010) shows that the program has not yet met the market needs in terms of providing students with sufficient skills to work as professional translators. As a result, only ten per cent of students graduating from our program seem to be ready to work as professional translators. The remaining ninety per cent need further practice and additional training. Most translation teachers lack formal training in translation and hand-on experience related to the translation profession. Only two out of 10 teachers in the program work part-time as professional translators or are actively involved in the translation industry in some other form. Since most teachers are not translators themselves or still need to fine-tune with the translation industry, it is often difficult for them to apply authentic teaching methods and provide students with authentic materials. They are unable to pass on to students the vocational experience and wisdom that is obviously valuable for the latter's career development (Doan Thanh Tuan, 2009). The fact that all students in the B.A. English language program, regardless of their linguistic competence, can choose to major in translation in their last two years at university also makes student delivery difficult.

Discussions and Implications

Program objectives

Setting the aim of the program is an essential step in any form of educational planning. Few would agree that students can work as professional translators soon after completing a B.A. program in translation, since translation requires long-term experience and complex skills, few of which can be gained through university training only. Nonetheless, a B.A. program should provide students with reasonably adequate knowledge and skills to embark on their profession and lifelong learning. In other words, while the goal of a B.A. program in translation should not be too ambitious, it should however offer students a good starting point and sufficient inspiration to progress in their career. Following Pym (2009), a B.A. program in translation needs to at least provide students with a solid background in language and communication skills, and very basic professional skills. Depending on the particular training situation, the aims of a program can vary. However, its basic aims should include:

- developing students' language skills in both a source language and a target language;
- providing students with basic linguistic and cultural knowledge of the source and target languages;
- helping students develop the professional skills and attributes required for translation practices;
- equipping students with conceptual understanding of the fundamental principles underpinning translation practices; and
- providing students with opportunities for non-specialised translation practices, and familiarising them with basic computer translation tools and resources.

Identifying the market needs

As hinted at above, today's global translation market is very demanding. Besides linguistic skills, professional translators need to possess a whole range of abilities, most of which cannot be acquired through formal university training, but rather require years of experience. The topics which most of the documents that clients on the market need to have translated revolve around are also varied, which represents a further challenge at the educational level in terms of the relevance of the contents of a translation course. A translation program in Vietnamese tertiary education should be designed in a way that can, to some extent, at least be informative for students of the challenges and demands of Vietnam's current translation market. For example, there should be room in the program for informative modules centering upon the linguistic, technological and business requirements of today's clients. Moreover, awareness should be raised about the types of documents usually entrusted for

translation, about the computer tools that can best aid the translation of those types of documents, as well as the rates and deadlines often accepted for such a job.

Students' needs

The skills and traits that professional translators require in their profession should be brought to the students' attention. Searls-Ridge (2000) suggests that, like any professional, a successful translator needs to possess the following abilities and personal traits, many of which overlap:

- to be successful a translator must have a good general education in addition to the prerequisite language skills;
- to be successful a translator must have above-average writing skills in the target language;
- to be successful a translator must have excellent computer skills and a willingness to continue to learn new technology;
- to be successful a translator must have good business skills, including marketing, negotiating, pricing, and time management; and
- to be successful a translator must know his or her limitations in all of the areas mentioned above.

While these skills can be a useful resource for translation training in general, Bernadini (2004) argues that *translator training* should not be confused with *translator education*. *Translation training* focuses on the mainly linguistic and technical skills required to produce an acceptable translation ("translation competence"). By contrast, *translator education* is mainly based on the need for students to acquire a wide range of interpersonal skills and attitudes ("translator competence"), beyond the purely linguistic and technical skills. For example, students should learn how to work in collaboration with other translators, as well with other professionals including project managers, and clients. In a tertiary program students should thus not only be trained linguistically; but they should also learn how to locate and evaluate information for themselves. Similarly, professional norms will not be absorbed simply by seeing own translations corrected but through work on 'authentic' professional tasks. In other words, within translator education, students should be taught not just how to do things but also how to become members of the various overlapping professional communities engaged in the production of translations (Pym, 2009).

Pedagogical practices

The traditional method used in a Vietnamese translation class is to have individual students translate a text then write the translation on the board or read it out, then have it evaluated, either by the teacher or by other students. This is easy to do but is actually not quite meaningful in view of the real translation job that students will be asked to do after graduation. To better prepare for future employment, students should work in a "like real" professional setting (Nord, 1997; Gouadec, 2007). What follows is a typical process a professional translator in Vietnam is usually involved in during his/her daily work. It can be a useful source of reference for designing relevant activities and practices in a translation class:

- The translator translates the document, self-edit it before sending his/her finished work to the translation project manager;
- The project manager has another translator review the translation and make track changes in the document;
- The first translator receives back the document with track change, and comments. He/she reviews the change and sends the revised work to the project manager; and
- The project manager reviews the final work in consultation with the translator and proofreader before sending the final work to the client. (Pham Hoa Hiep & Ton Nu Nhu Huong, 2009)

In a translation class students can work in small groups, often in different roles, such as translator, reviewer, and project manager. Classroom activities can vary ranging from translating, editing and proofreading, and evaluating. Providing students with the opportunity for reflective and creative application of the translation theories and professional concepts learnt through activities such as role play, case studies and video analysis should also be at the heart of pedagogy for translation training and education.

Coupled with professional knowledge, employability skills should also be a component in the translation program in particular and tertiary education in general. There are various definitions of employability skills in the international literature and these may vary according to national, cultural and professional contexts. Yet they are often described to include: communication, teamwork, problem-solving, self-management, planning and organisation, use of technology, lifelong learning, initiative

and enterprise skills (Garnett, 2012). Developing a career in the field of translation requires a commitment to juggle between competing demands growing out of the highly interconnected, intercultural, interpersonal and interdisciplinary context in which the translation profession is operating. Therefore, in order to be professionally ready for the translation world, not only professional knowledge and skills but also the capacity to foster lifelong learning, search for new knowledge and the techniques needed for their profession is critical for graduates. To secure employment and to stay employed in the context of a socialist-oriented market economy in Vietnam, graduates also need to be well prepared to flexibly navigate and apply both theoretical and practical knowledge to different professional contexts and to be responsive to changes. These 'soft' skills are crucial and need to be integrated into the teaching and learning of translation in Vietnamese tertiary education.

Student recruitment

As mentioned above, many B.A. language programs in Vietnam and in Asia are only designed to develop language skills rather than prepare students to become professional translators. Apparently not all students graduating from B.A. language programs will have sufficient skills to work as translators. Therefore, it is important to set at least one specific professional goal for all B.A. language programs - to offer students a specialised course that leads to a degree in translation rather than a general degree in English language skills. To this end, professional translation training should be offered to a number of students in a B.A. language program rather than to all of them. Selection criteria should be designed for this purpose in terms of linguistics, attitudes and motivations. For example, at some points in a program, assessment may be undertaken to ensure that students have a certain command of language skills to be chosen for a specific translation training program. Essays and interviews may be used to select appropriate students who are both competent enough and interested in becoming professional translators.

Translation teachers

Recruiting appropriate staff for a program in translation can be challenging, too. In many university programs, staff are considered to be academically qualified if they have an M.A. or Ph.D degree only, so they simply do not have the professional experience required to train professional translators. Because of this, it is important for teaching staff to network with professional translators. Translation teachers need to attend professional seminars, update their knowledge regarding the translation industry and study the employers' needs to be able to deliver effective courses. Improving teacher professional development is essential for improving the quality of teaching and learning. Therefore, it is critical to have more adequate and coherent structure at the institutional as well as departmental levels to support the professional learning of translation teachers and foster their sustained engagement with the translation industry.

Partnerships with professional organisations and industry

The lack of input from the industry and employment market is one of the current weaknesses of Vietnam tertiary education (Chiến Lược Phát Triển Giáo Dục Việt Nam, 2008) and, as indicated in the discussion above, translation programs are not an exception. Establishing deep connections and active partnerships with the translation industry and organisations is crucial to enhance professional learning, bridge the gaps between translation theory and practice and support the quality of translation training and education. Some activities to engage with the profession may include inviting professional translators, alumni and employers in the translation industry to deliver talks on issues related to the profession and industry. These topics may include opportunities and challenges confronting the profession and the partners, key features of the translation markets, and what constitutes competencies, skills and the knowledge needed for the profession from the point of view of employers and practitioners in the field. It is also critical for institutions to develop the capacity to deliver translation training in partnership with professional organisations and industry, for instance organising workshops as a part of the translation program together with employer representatives and/or professional translators. Critical reflection on guided questions should be accompanied with these activities since this enables students to draw meaningful implications for further practice. All these initiatives cannot be realised without support from the institution. Thus, institutions play an important role in providing systemic and coherent guidelines and support not only for developing but also sustaining partnerships and engagement with the professional organisations and industry.

Work-integrated learning that involves the development of professional knowledge, skill acquisition and application (Garnett, 2012) is regarded as an important innovation that tertiary education institutions can organise to effectively engage students in real-life work experience. Within the context

of Vietnam, work-integrated learning within the translation program could happen in the form of fieldtrips, internships, work-based learning projects and work placements assessed by workplace mentors or lecturers. Voluntary work in the translation industry can be a useful opportunity for students to become familiar with their professional field and enhance their employability. In addition, other initiatives such as alumni engagement, networked career opportunities and employment advisory capability could be effective work-connected learning forms to assist students with the enhancement of understandings and linkage to their future profession and translation industry.

Program evaluation

A tertiary program in translation can be evaluated by examining to what extent it meets both the market needs and students' needs. One way to evaluate the program is to conduct surveys and interviews with new graduates who work professionally as translators, and identify the skills and knowledge they have learnt in the program that they think are still useful for them, as well as those that need developing further. Program designers and administrators also need to maintain frequent contacts with translation agencies, professional organizations, and employers in an attempt to identify the emerging needs in the market. Evaluation tasks should not only be carried out by the program designer or the instructor but should also be conducted in collaboration with the graduate students, translation agencies and employers.

Conclusion

This paper focuses on the translation curriculum in Vietnam and how it struggles to respond effectively to the employment market beyond it. At the broader level, it also reveals that there is still a disconnection between the tertiary education curriculum as a whole and the actual demands of the professional field in Vietnam. A reform of the curriculum is needed; this should extend the conventional aims of tertiary education, which are still theory-oriented and scholastically-driven, to include the development of graduate knowledge, skills and attributes for the world of work. Integrating employment skills into translation programs is the necessary step towards a more responsive translation curriculum in the contemporary context of Vietnam. This process would add value to and enrich the learning experience and professional capacity of all students majoring in translation. Such a reform is critical to prepare graduates for more productive workforce and more engaged citizenship.

Drawing on the translation program in Vietnam's tertiary education, the paper also generates a number of implications for curriculum reform to move towards ensuring professional readiness for graduates. These range from developing the objectives for the program, evaluating the market needs, identifying the student needs, selecting students, improving teacher professional development, innovating pedagogical practices, developing partnership with professional organisations and industries to evaluating the program. These are key steps in the preparation, design, delivery and evaluation of the curriculum. Of course there is no pre-packaged, 'fit-all' formula. Yet, the discussion of the translation curriculum as a case study for this paper may provide useful insights for teachers and program developers when planning a curriculum that at least attempts to respond to the world of work in specific local contexts.

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