



IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING STAFF AT THAI NGUYEN UNIVERSITY, VIETNAM IN THE CURRENT PHASE

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Abstract:

Thai Nguyen University in Vietnam identifies improving the quality of the foreign language teaching staff as one of the priority tasks in the development strategy, training advanced and modern human resources to serve the economic, political, cultural, and social development needs of the midland and northern mountainous regions. Despite certain achievements, due to its unique characteristics, Thai Nguyen University is facing numerous challenges, especially in terms of the foreign language faculty, which is deficient and weak compared to the requirements. To meet the needs of training and cultivating foreign language teachers in the future, it is necessary to conduct research to accurately assess the current situation and propose solutions to improve the quality of the foreign language teaching staff.

Keywords: quality improvement, foreign language teachers, Thai Nguyen University

1. Introduction

Improving the quality of faculty in universities and colleges is a concern that countries worldwide pay attention to, considering it a human resource "foundation" for the construction, training, cultivation, and development of high-quality human resources to meet the process of international integration.

2. Criteria for Evaluating the Improvement of the Quality of Foreign Language Teaching Staff at Thai Nguyen University

To correctly assess the quality of the faculty, it is necessary to fully consider the evaluation criteria in the system. The evaluation should be objective, comprehensive, and specific to history, both quantitatively and qualitatively, considering quantity to define

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quality; comprehensively considering and synthesizing all measurable and quantifiable factors to define the quality of the foreign language teaching staff.

- Criteria about political qualities, ethics, and lifestyle:
 - Political qualities;
 - Professional ethics;
 - Lifestyle, style;
 - Preserve and protect the traditional ethics of teachers.
- Criteria about quantity, structure:
 - There should be at least 1 PhD in a suitable field as a full-time lecturer to preside over the construction and implementation of the training program;
 - There should be at least 5 PhDs with suitable specializations as full-time lecturers to preside over the teaching of the program, each component of the program should have lecturers with suitable specializations to preside over teaching;
 - There should be enough lecturers to ensure that the ratio of students per lecturer does not exceed the prescribed limit for each field, sector, or training industry.
- Criteria about education level and professional qualifications:
 - Must have a master's degree or higher suitable for the job position, field, or specialized field of foreign language teaching;
 - Foreign language lecturers in the specialized sector must have an international language certificate equivalent to C2 according to European standards, non-specialized foreign language teaching must have a language certificate equivalent to C1 international according to European standards and a second language certificate level B1 international according to European standards, specifically: French-DELF B1, Chinese-HSK3, Russian-TORFL-1;
 - Thoroughly understand the basic knowledge of the subjects assigned to teach; have general knowledge about some related subjects in the specialized training sector assigned to be in charge;
 - Understand and correctly implement the objectives, plans, content, and program of the subjects assigned to the specialized training sector. Identify the practicality and development trends of training and research in the specialized sector both domestically and abroad;
 - Effectively and safely use teaching aids, teaching equipment, have effective teaching methods appropriate to the content of the subject; teaching meets or exceeds requirements;
 - Have the ability to do scientific research; apply scientific and technical advancements, technology in teaching and tasks assigned;
 - Have the ability to apply information technology in carrying out tasks.

3. Current State of the Foreign Language Faculty at Thai Nguyen University

The general approach in building a foreign language teaching staff includes: focusing on developing a faculty of foreign language teachers with advanced levels (Ph.D., Masters), capable of effectively using information technology in their specialty; enhancing the quantity and quality of foreign language teachers for some new foreign language training fields and specialized foreign language training. Concurrently, with the selection and training of young lecturers, the foreign language faculty will be gradually built and formed in the direction of having strong scientific groups, creating spearheads in training, research, and application; building plans for training, fostering, arranging manpower reasonably, and having a synchronized policy in selection, usage, and remuneration; enhancing unified direction as well as perfecting the organization and the rational decentralization of management to meet the needs and scale of development.

○ Strengths:

- Political quality, ethics, and lifestyle: Almost all foreign language lecturers in the University have a solid political stance, always conscious of cultivating and maintaining political qualities, building a solid internal unity block. They often enhance revolutionary moral qualities and live a simple, healthy life close to the people. They effectively implement the party's guidelines and the state's laws.
- The majority of foreign language teachers play a pioneering role, setting examples in various aspects, showing high responsibility, dynamism, creativity, striving hard to fulfill assigned tasks.
- Quantity and structure: The work of developing and building the faculty of Thai Nguyen University in recent years has achieved many good results. In particular, the number of lecturers with doctoral and master's degrees is high compared to other universities in the region.
- By June 2023, the foreign language teaching faculty at Thai Nguyen University consisted of 245 people, with the rate of Professors and Associate Professors at 0%; 48 Doctorates accounted for 19.6%; 167 Masters accounted for 68.1%; 30 Bachelor's degree holders accounted for 12.3%. To meet the fast-growing demand for training scale, the number of newly recruited lecturers and lecturers at the University has also increased significantly.
- Training and professional levels: Most lecturers in the University are given conditions to go to school to improve professional qualifications, foreign language proficiency, and informatics. As of June 2023, nearly 90% of language-specialized teachers met the language standards from C1 upwards. For non-specialized language teachers, the percentage of teachers meeting the new language standards accounted for 89%. The rate of foreign language teachers meeting informatics standards was nearly 99%.

○ Limitations:

- Political quality, ethics, and lifestyle: Some foreign language lecturers are reluctant to learn and practice, showing weaknesses and inadequacies compared to the task requirements assigned, solving problems, being in class is still awkward, lacking sensitivity and initiative, often relying on experiences that are no longer relevant to the current stage.
- Quantity and structure: The quality, quantity, and structure are inadequate: There are no professors or associate professors. The proportion of PhDs among the total number of foreign language teachers is still low; the lack of leading teachers and leading experts in the field.
- There is a lack of balance among foreign language training disciplines.
- The number of native foreign language teachers is very small.
- Training level and professional tasks: A part is not keeping up with the requirements of innovation and education development, is still weak, teaching methods are slow to innovate, and have not met the requirements of teaching and learning according to competence development orientation. The proportion of teachers meeting international standards for language proficiency needs to be higher.
- Scientific technology products and international articles are still limited compared to the task requirements set.
- Sending lecturers for Ph.D. training in recent years has been unbalanced, especially in newly opened disciplines, the rate of Ph.D. is still low compared to requirements.
- Infrastructure and teaching equipment only meet the minimum level.
- Besides, the mechanism and policy for faculty development are not synchronized and still have limitations; remuneration and honor policies are not commensurate, not creating motivation for the faculty to strive for self-study, and self-training to improve capacity.
- The work of developing foreign language teaching staff has not been consistent and synchronized from building plans, recruiting, training, fostering, and evaluating the quality of teachers annually. The inadequacies in the policy mechanism for foreign language faculty have significantly affected the training quality.

4. Proposing Solutions to Improve the Quality of Foreign Language Faculty at Thai Nguyen University

4.1. Carry Out a Comprehensive Review and Assessment of the Foreign Language Faculty

- To improve the quality of the foreign language faculty, an immediate survey, screening, and comprehensive evaluation must be carried out to identify the number of excess or insufficient staff and to accurately determine their quality.

This serves as a basis for planning and building a training and development program for foreign language teachers.

- Organize a review of the roles, responsibilities, foreign language teaching staff, and current status of facilities, and equipment of the units throughout Thai Nguyen University.
- Clearly define training directions, focal points, and key research areas to develop a strategic faculty plan.

4.2. Develop a Scientific and Reasonable Faculty Planning Strategy

- Develop an overall plan for recruitment, assignment, use, training, fostering, and creating a conducive working environment for the faculty, and a comprehensive, synchronized implementation plan with key priorities, prioritizing expertise and professional quality.
- Continue to effectively carry out faculty training.
- Planned faculty members must be listed for management and monitoring. Annually, it is necessary to summarize and draw lessons from faculty planning to make adjustments and additions.
- Attract native foreign language teachers, creating a dynamic and fresh language environment.

4.3. Strengthen Training and Fostering

- Enhance training and fostering to improve the professional level in the direction of doctoral training, specialized training, double degrees suitable to the function, task of training, fostering multi-disciplinary, multi-sector to meet the socio-economic development needs of the locality and region.
- Training and fostering must be carried out through statistical data of foreign language teachers who have not yet met standards, teaching quality, scientific research capacity, occupational development scale, the number of current teachers, the desires, and strengths of individuals. Based on that, compile and classify the training and fostering needs for each phase that is close to the actual situation of each department and the common development goal of the school.
- Publicize the planning, training, and fostering plans for foreign language teachers at each stage so that each unit and individual can proactively arrange, and assign tasks and teachers to participate in training courses. This helps avoid situations where a large number of teachers go for long-term training abroad, leading to a shortage of teachers in the unit and overloading of work.
- It is necessary to focus on developing teaching skills, the ability to use active teaching methods appropriate to the profession, and online teaching abilities applied in university education such as E-learning; B-learning; teleconference seminars, scenario-based teaching, group discussions, exploration, simulation, project. Practice communication skills; problem-solving and decision-making skills; conflict management and negotiation skills; continuous learning and self-

development skills; the ability to use modern equipment and tools in teaching (managing resources, data on the internet, mastering the use of new technology to serve the teaching process).

4.4. Promote Scientific Research Activities among Faculty Members

- Promote scientific research activities by increasing funds for foreign language teachers to implement grassroots level and Ministry level topics, encouraging foreign language teachers to write articles for publication in the Journal of the Annual Scientific Conference organization, faculty forums, professional exchanges between departments, etc. at international seminars at home and abroad.
- Supplement additional books, international scientific journals, buy international scientific database copyright to help teachers update new knowledge, grasp the world's development trends, have abundant reference resources for research, especially in-depth research such as thesis writing, essay writing, journal writing, and carrying out school level and higher research topics.

4.5. Implementing the Renewal of Regimes and Policies Well

- Build and implement appropriate remuneration policies including salary and treatment policies for foreign language teachers.
- Create a unique mechanism for attracting high-level professional foreign language faculty members, good practical teaching, and outstanding achievements in labor, study, and scientific research.

4.6. Create a Work Environment, Enhance Working Conditions

- Build a friendly working environment. Create promotion opportunities for teachers, and promote personal capacities.
- Invest in modern equipment for teaching.
- Boost cooperation, domestic and international training linkage to create a learning environment, exchange, improve foreign language professional and new teaching methods, and create a dynamic international environment.
- Replicate the linkage model between the school and businesses so that teachers can participate directly in the practice and work in enterprises, creating conditions for innovation, creativity, and linking theory with practice.

4.7. Enhance the Management, Inspection, and Supervision of Foreign Language Lecturers

- Ensure foreign language lecturers strictly adhere to the organization's discipline and decorum, improve their responsibility and awareness of organizational discipline.
- Manage, inspect, and supervise foreign language lecturers in aspects such as ideological perception, work capacity, social relationships, ethics, and lifestyle...

This should be carried out regularly. Strengthening forms of inspection and supervision by the organization, by the people, and by the party cell where the foreign language lecturers reside will significantly contribute to improving the quality of the foreign language lecturing staff.

- The evaluation of lecturers must be democratic and transparent, based on the specific actions of each individual, using the completion of assigned tasks as the main measure to evaluate the quality and ability of lecturers. In evaluating lecturers, consider the purpose and motive of task completion, and whether tasks are not completed under favorable or challenging conditions, whether achievements and shortcomings are temporary or continuous.
- Regularly inspect, evaluate, and classify the staff according to standard criteria, and on this basis assign, use, train, and foster the staff reasonably, ensuring stable and sustainable development.

5. Conclusion

In the strategy of innovating education and training in general, there are many things to do and they must be carried out synchronously, but developing a high-quality team of lecturers is a top priority strategy. For Thai Nguyen University, improving the quality of the faculty is an urgent task and a long-term strategic move for the development of the University.

Conflict of Interest Statement

I declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)

Nguyen Thi Lan Anh is a distinguished member of the academic community at Thai Nguyen University in Thai Nguyen, Vietnam. With an impressive teaching career spanning over 15 years, she is recognized as a dedicated foreign language lecturer at the institution. Alongside her teaching accomplishments, Nguyen Thi Lan Anh boasts over nine years of expertise in the realm of educational management.

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