

From an Overview of Human Resource Management Research to Research Orientations on Management of Lecturers of Vietnamese Universities

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Abstract: Lecturers constitute the core force in ensuring the quality of education, scientific research, and the development of organizational culture. Therefore, managing the academic staff plays a pivotal role in the strategic development of higher education. However, an overview analysis of existing research on human resource management and faculty management reveals that most current studies approach the topic in a fragmented manner, focusing only on specific aspects without a comprehensive theoretical framework, and inadequately reflecting the profound social transformations impacting universities. From these research gaps, this article proposes three theoretical and practical research directions to address faculty management issues in Vietnamese universities: (1) developing a systemic faculty management model that integrates educational philosophy, policy, procedures, and management technologies; (2) designing a competency framework for lecturers tailored to the specific conditions of each institution; and (3) constructing a set of performance evaluation indicators (KPIs) to improve the efficiency of academic human resource management and development.

Keywords: Educational Human Resources, Human Resource Management, University Faculty Management.

1. INTRODUCTION

Lecturers are the key human resources directly responsible for generating the core values of a university, primarily through teaching and research (Selesho & Naile, 2024). Moreover, they shape the institution's organizational culture and identity and manage other institutional resources (Haq, John, Gul, & Rao, 2024).

According to the 2012 Law on Higher Education and its 2019 amended version, lecturers must possess a clear personal identity, good moral character, adequate health, and qualifications that meet the legal and institutional requirements of higher education institutions.

Functionally, lecturers are tasked with three key domains: teaching, research, and community service (Phuong, 2019). To meet these job requirements, lecturers must satisfy the academic qualification standards set out in Circular No. 40/2020/TT-BGDĐT, ranging from Bachelor's to Doctoral degrees, corresponding to roles such as Teaching Assistant, Lecturer Class II or III, and Senior Lecturer (Class I).

In Vietnam, beyond strict requirements on qualifications, lecturers must also meet professional ethics standards such as dedication to the profession, modesty, clarity, positivity in interactions with colleagues, students, and the community. Legal documents and practice affirm that lecturers are entitled to respect, equality, and fairness; they are encouraged to participate in community service, professional development, and are permitted to engage in visiting lectureships, collaborative research, and entrepreneurship, provided such activities do not violate institutional regulations.

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However, whether lecturers can fully realize their potential and contribute effectively to institutional development depends largely on human resource management activities, with faculty management being the most critical aspect. As a specialized area within human resource management, faculty management encompasses all characteristics, functions, and procedures inherent to HRM.

Human resource management is often described as the “heart” of educational governance (Teir & Zhan, 2016), serving as both the future and the essential determinant of institutional success or failure (Mohiuddin, Hosseini, Faradonbeh, & Sabokro, 2022). Only through effective HRM can institutions gain strategic advantages in key areas such as research quality, academic reputation, curriculum development, societal impact, leadership development, and the cultivation of a high-quality workforce (Teir & Zhan, 2016). Consequently, universities become more attractive to top scholars and researchers, thereby enhancing institutional quality and global ranking (Amin, Ismail, Rasid, & Selemani, 2014).

HRM has become increasingly important since the 1980s due to global transformations such as internationalization, globalization, rapid technological advances, the COVID-19 pandemic, brain drain, and a critical shortage of high-quality faculty, all of which place immense pressure on HRM to resolve personnel crises at various levels. These challenges have spurred the emergence and development of various HRM theoretical models. Nevertheless, empirical evidence shows that many of these models have failed or underperformed when applied in practice, particularly at the institutional level.

Vietnamese higher education is undergoing profound changes to align with global trends, enhancing HRM effectiveness an urgent task. The State is gradually refining the legal framework to grant universities greater autonomy and practical capacity in developing and managing their academic staff. However, how to translate policy into effective institutional management tools and how to develop systems suited to real-world conditions remain open research questions. The theoretical model presented in this paper serves as a foundation for evaluating the current state of faculty management in Vietnamese universities. Based on this model, institutions may propose appropriate measures to improve the quality of their faculty, a factor vital to the survival and development of any higher education institution.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Human Resource Management

Human resources began to be studied in 1776 with the advent of Human Capital Theory (Sweetland, 1996), which viewed individuals in organizations as akin to production machines and profitable investments, reflecting a pragmatic capitalist perspective. The ultimate metric of human capital was the surplus value created for organizations and income generated for individuals (Eide & Showalter, 2010). This materialistic view gradually shifted as education and training were recognized as transformative forces that change human values in qualitative terms. Accordingly, human capital encompasses not only physical capabilities but also knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors shaped and refined through education, collectively referred to as a person’s internal competencies (Eide & Showalter, 2010).

Research on human resources has been profoundly influenced by major social movements advocating for human rights, gender equality, democracy, and freedom. By the 1960s, the term “human capital” began to be replaced by “human resources” to emphasize the social nature of people: “the total labor-capable population, regardless of sector or occupation” (Tiệp, 2008). As a result, the term “human resource management” (HRM) became widely adopted, replacing the older term “personnel management.” The establishment of two leading international journals, Human Resource Management Journal (HRMJ) and The International Journal of Human Resource Management (IJHRM), formally recognized HRM as a distinct academic discipline.

Storey (1996) defined HRM as a strategic approach aimed at gaining a competitive advantage by employing a highly skilled and stable workforce. In simple terms, HRM involves managing people across all job levels to achieve organizational objectives (Schuler & Jackson, 1987). However, managing people goes beyond maintaining favorable working conditions or meeting minimum needs; it treats individuals as irreplaceable assets whose motivation, engagement, and identification with the organization are key to success. HRM must also adapt to external environmental shifts (Yu-Ru, 1999).

David Guest (1989) was the first to introduce two distinct approaches to human resource management (HRM), grounded in the view that HRM involves the flexible management of people in a constantly changing environment. These two approaches, soft HRM and hard HRM (also referred to as loose HRM and tight HRM), are based on contrasting assumptions about human nature, which are deeply rooted in the renowned Theory X and Theory Y.

Soft HRM regards people as valuable resources worthy of investment (Ahammad, 2017), as irreplaceable assets requiring appropriate management mechanisms, especially for personnel in critical organizational roles (Truss *et al.*, 1997;

Ahammad, 2017). This approach reflects a positive view of human nature, asserting that individuals are capable of self-regulation and therefore should not be controlled through punitive or coercive measures (Wood, 1996). Effective people management, from this perspective, requires flexibility, leadership skills, motivational abilities (Yu-Ru, 1999), trust, and communication (Storey, 1996).

Conversely, hard HRM perceives people as a special kind of machinery whose value lies in the economic output they generate for the organization. This pragmatic, mechanistic viewpoint emphasizes quantitative analysis and cost-benefit calculations in economic strategy (Storey, 1992). Human resources are not prioritized above other organizational resources but are treated on an equal footing. HRM, from this standpoint, aims to maximize employee productivity at the lowest possible cost to generate optimal material benefits. However, managing people is far more complex and challenging than managing other resources such as technology or finance, because humans represent the most intricate domain (Tiwari & Saxena, 2012). If humans are considered “black boxes,” then HRM is the process of decoding those boxes to identify the factors that enhance labor productivity (Schuler & Jackson, 1987).

A dominant research trend in HRM has been to examine each component of people management in isolation. This traditional approach has gradually been replaced by more holistic views. Schuler (1992) argued that HRM should not be limited to managing individual employees or groups but should encompass the complex web of relationships among employees, between employees and managers, and between the organization and external stakeholders.

To date, HRM remains a concept lacking complete consensus, particularly concerning its content and processes. In 1998, Redman and Mathews outlined six fundamental HRM activities, sequenced as follows: recruitment and selection; compensation and benefits; job design and assignment; training and learning; internal communication; and performance evaluation and rewards. Meanwhile, Khasawneh (2011) identified five core activities: workforce planning, HR analysis, organization and deployment, guidance, and supervision. Obedgiu (2017) defined HRM as a chain of activities from talent search and recruitment to training, development, evaluation, and rewards. In the context of aging populations, wars, pandemics, natural disasters, and labor shortages (Selesho & Naile, 2024; Aitken-Fox *et al.*, 2023), the retention and maintenance of high-quality human capital (Bushe, Chiwira, & Chawawa, 2012) have become urgent priorities.

HRM emerged relatively late in Vietnam. Early studies mainly focused on theoretical generalizations and international experience (Nghì & Ngan, 2004), laying the foundation for subsequent research in the field. Pham Minh Hac (2004) summarized historical perspectives on human development by linking economic and social periods to key philosophical questions: “What is a human being? What is human nature?” and “What is the relationship between humans and socio-economic development?” In Vietnam, early 20th-century human capital development focused on cultivating individuals with strong cultural identities, industrial work ethics, and creativity to meet the demands of IT integration, aligned with the strategic goals of “enhancing public knowledge, training human resources, and nurturing talent.”

In recent years, the scope of the human resource concept has expanded. HR now includes physical and intellectual capabilities, personality traits (Tien, 2010), cultural identity (Hac, 2007; Chi, 2004), moral values, professional ethics, general and vocational competencies, experience, and health status (Kha, 2017). Defining the nature, roles, and functions of human resources serves as a vital guide for HRM practices, an essential determinant of organizational survival and growth.

There is a significant disparity in HRM between public and non-public organizations in Vietnam (Thu & Ngan, 2013). HRM in public institutions must follow strict procedures dictated by legal frameworks, whereas non-public organizations exercise more flexibility. HRM activities include job analysis, workforce planning, recruitment, training, evaluation, compensation, and policy formulation (Dung, 2013). Legal barriers contribute to ineffective recruitment, lack of transparency, misaligned standards, limited access for overseas professionals, and non-competitive or symbolic hiring processes (Chinh, 2023).

2.2. Managing the Teaching Team

In recent years, the growing recognition of faculty members' direct impact on the quality of human capital for socio-economic development has served as a wake-up call for policymakers, institutional leaders, education managers, and scholars to prioritize faculty management in universities. As a subset of HRM, faculty management is the soul of higher education HRM and reflects the historical, functional, and strategic dimensions of HRM.

Faculty management is a dual process of individual and collective management, aiming to assign the right people to the right jobs, ensure a stable and safe working environment, and provide professional development opportunities (Patrick & Mazhar, 2019). It involves key activities such as: (1) HR planning and strategy; (2) workforce demand analysis; (3) recruitment and selection; (4) competency assessment; (5) training and development; (6) appointment and promotion;

(7) compensation and rewards; (8) HR analysis and reporting; and (9) information systems and HR governance (Pausits *et al.*, 2022).

Faculty management spans multiple stages and varies by institution based on needs and strategic priorities, including recruitment (Karim *et al.*, 2021; Breaugh & Starke, 2000; Prashant, 2009); deployment (Menon, 2015; Selesho & Naile, 2024); retention (Anwar & Balcioglu, 2016; Netswera & Mavundal, 2005; Chaudhary & Bhaskar, 2016); training (Subramaniam *et al.*, 2011); evaluation (Khoury & Analoui, 2004); and reward systems (Nyameino *et al.*, 2014; Gieter & Hofmans, 2015).

Most existing studies focus on isolated aspects of HRM or examine the influence of different variables on HR practices. Bushe (2012), Anwar & Balcioglu (2016), and Netswera & Mavundal (2005) identified links between HR effectiveness and leadership capacity, working environment, incentive systems, autonomy, trust, and intra-organizational communication. Meanwhile, Peteraf (1993), Wagner *et al.*, (2000), Ballot *et al.*, (2006), and Okechukwu (2017) emphasized the role of training in enhancing personal and institutional development. Training is considered the most sustainable and profitable investment, yielding future labor quality, improved research output, expanded cooperation, institutional prestige, and competitiveness. It also serves as recognition and motivation, boosting satisfaction and commitment.

External factors, such as globalization (Morley *et al.*, 2006; Jackson *et al.*, 2014; Groenewald *et al.*, 2024), technological advances (DeFillippi, 2002; Garavan & McCarthy, 2008), history, tradition, and organizational culture (Val & Fuentes, 2003; Hattangadi, 2015; Alqudaha *et al.*, 2022), significantly influence HRM and faculty management globally.

In Vietnam, scholars increasingly acknowledge that HRM can significantly impact the quantity and quality of university human capital, especially faculty (Anh & Chi, 2024; Quyen, 2023). Consequently, many studies assess HRM practices and influencing factors to inform solutions aligned with state and institutional strategies. For example, Cuong & Oanh (2022), Chinh (2023), and Thap & Anh (2019) identified faculty shortages, skill gaps, and uneven distribution due to legal and institutional barriers affecting recruitment, deployment, and training. Solutions proposed include granting universities greater autonomy; decoupling HRM from state control (Chinh, 2023); building faculty management procedures and competency frameworks (Hung, 2023; Thanh, 2017; Ngoc & Thuy, 2020; Khoi, 2024); enhancing the role of university councils; simplifying administrative processes; adjusting recruitment criteria and compensation to attract talent; sending lecturers abroad for training; nurturing top students; and linking research to educational practice (Thap & Anh, 2019).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Within the framework of the study titled “From the Literature Review of Human Resource Management to the Research Orientation of Faculty Management in Vietnamese Universities,” the research methodology employed is a qualitative approach in combination with documentary research. These two methods are highly suitable for addressing theoretical issues, providing in-depth analysis of conceptual content, models, trends, and developmental contexts, particularly relevant for exploratory and theory-oriented research in higher education.

3.1. Documentary Research

Documentary research was conducted to synthesize, analyze, and systematize both domestic and international academic works on human resource management, with a special focus on faculty management in higher education institutions. Sources include monographs, scientific articles, dissertations, strategic reports from educational organizations, and relevant policy and legal documents. Materials were selected based on academic value, relevance, and recency (with priority given to documents published from 2015 onward).

The strength of this method lies in its capacity to provide a comprehensive picture of the research issue, identify knowledge gaps and development trends in theory and practice, thereby laying a solid foundation for further theoretical orientation. However, its limitation stems from dependency on the credibility and quality of the sources, especially those in foreign languages. Additionally, without deep academic analytical and classification skills, literature synthesis may risk repetition and superficiality.

3.2. Qualitative Research

In this study, qualitative methods are primarily applied through in-depth content analysis, logical reasoning, and conceptual interpretation. The focus is on elucidating the nature of factors influencing faculty management amid ongoing transformations in higher education, including university autonomy, digital transformation, faculty standardization, and international integration. Rather than relying on quantitative statistics, the researcher explores applicable concepts, models, principles, and international experiences relevant to the Vietnamese context.

The advantages of qualitative methods include depth of analysis, flexibility, and the ability to reflect the complexity and multidimensionality of socio-educational phenomena, especially valuable when theoretical frameworks are unstable and realities are rapidly evolving. Nonetheless, qualitative methods have limitations in generalizability and empirical verifiability. Moreover, their reliance on individual reasoning requires researchers to possess a strong academic foundation to ensure objectivity and scientific integrity.

The combination of these two methods is appropriate for a study with a theoretical, review-oriented nature. It enables the researcher not only to identify the existing knowledge base but also to develop a distinct approach for managing faculty in the current Vietnamese higher education landscape. However, to enhance practical value, future research may incorporate quantitative methods, empirical surveys, and specific case analyses.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Faculty members are the core force responsible for generating academic and research value and for shaping the organizational culture of universities. The effectiveness of their roles and functions depends largely on the philosophy and practices of human resource management. However, the literature review indicates that most current studies on faculty management focus only on specific HRM components such as recruitment, training, or reward, and lack a systematic model for faculty management.

A systems approach allows researchers and educators to comprehensively examine HRM components and their interrelations in organizational operations. The absence of a holistic model results in fragmented snapshots of faculty management practices, often reflecting only partial aspects of HRM in certain institutions or regions.

Faculty management is the most critical function within a university. It is subject to various economic, political, and social pressures, particularly from both domestic and international education reform trends. Therefore, faculty management must consider contextual influences in its strategic planning. Given that the Vietnamese higher education system remains under strict governmental oversight, evaluating policy impacts on faculty management has become a popular research focus. However, other influential factors, such as autonomy, leadership capacity, organizational culture, and faculty motivation, remain underexplored.

In recent years, the trend toward institutional autonomy has increasingly shaped the strategies and policies across the higher education system. Still, most research evaluates policy impacts at the system level, with few studies addressing the institutional level. The relationship between national HRM policies and university-level HRM, including challenges, adaptability, and transformation, demands deeper investigation. Furthermore, management differences across universities, institutional types, and regional contexts must be compared to provide both macro and micro solutions for enhancing faculty management capacity and effectiveness.

From the overview analysis, several research directions are suggested to address theoretical and practical issues in faculty management:

First, the most urgent theoretical need is to develop a systems-based or competency-based model of faculty management that is quantifiable and applicable in practice. A comprehensive model for faculty management in Vietnamese universities should integrate components such as philosophy, policy, procedures, organizational culture, technology, and autonomy context. Only such an integrated model can help institutions fully assess their current situation, identify influencing factors, and propose more effective HRM solutions.

Second, although the State has promulgated standards regarding lecturer competencies and qualities, these standards often do not align with the practical conditions of each locality and institution. This misalignment poses challenges in recruitment, training, and faculty evaluation. Therefore, developing a competency framework for lecturers that integrates national policies with the local realities of individual universities and regions can help untangle existing barriers in recruitment and professional development. This, in turn, may address the current issues of insufficient quantity, inadequate quality, and uneven distribution of faculty across the system.

Third, to overcome the prevailing issues of formalistic, subjective, and rigid lecturer evaluation practices, an urgent requirement for both the higher education system and individual institutions is to establish a regulatory framework and a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess faculty performance. These are critical directions for both theoretical and practical research, at both the systemic and institutional levels, to support the development of a faculty workforce that meets the demands of the national human resource development strategy, a core driver of national progress.

5. DISCUSSION

Based on the synthesis and analysis of relevant literature, the following discussion elaborates on the key characteristics, gaps, and valuable directions for future research. Specifically, the review of both domestic and international

studies reveals an uneven level of development between the general field of human resource management and the more specialized domain of faculty management. Additionally, the lack of integration between Vietnam's educational context and international models highlights an urgent need for a localized yet globally-informed research approach tailored to the realities of higher education in Vietnam.

From the review of scholarly works, it is evident that human resource management, in general, has a well-established theoretical foundation, with key contributions from Armstrong (2020), Torrington *et al.*, (2017), and Boxall & Purcell (2016). Models such as competency-based HRM, strategic human resource management (SHRM), and sustainable HRM have been implemented across both developed and developing countries.

However, narrowing the focus to faculty management, particularly in countries undergoing educational transformation, such as Vietnam, reveals a relatively limited body of research. Notable studies by Nghi (2017), Hop (2019), Duchiep (2022), Van (2023), Vu (2023) and Tuan (2023) have discussed recruitment, training, and faculty evaluation, but are generally descriptive and administrative rather than strategic.

Most current research in Vietnam lacks a comprehensive theoretical framework for faculty management as a distinct component of HRM within the context of autonomous universities. Few studies address issues related to international integration, digital transformation, or sustainable development in higher education. For instance, Bien (2020) analyzed faculty evaluation based on CDIO standards but did not explore the link between HRM innovation and teaching quality improvement. Similarly, Thanh (2022) approached university governance through the academic institution model but failed to distinguish between the academic, research, and community service roles of faculty. Compared to international models, Vietnamese studies often lack in-depth analysis of the critical relationship among policy, organizational culture, and faculty motivation, elements central to effective HRM under university autonomy.

Studies from the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Singapore show a clear shift from administrative to performance- and competency-based faculty management, supported by big data technologies and 360-degree evaluations. Scholars such as Rowley (2000), Knight & Trowler (2001), and Marginson (2017) emphasize that lecturers are not merely knowledge transmitters but serve as catalysts for academic innovation, curriculum development, and organizational cultural change.

In contrast, implementing these international models in Vietnam requires a high degree of decentralization, a healthy academic competition environment, and transparent reward-punishment mechanisms, all of which are still in developmental stages within public universities. Consequently, uncritical adoption of international models without adapting to Vietnam's realities, such as managerial capacity, financial systems, and organizational culture, risks implementation failure.

From this review and comparison, it is clear that faculty management should be studied as a strategic process aligned with the mission and educational philosophy of each university. Management should move beyond administrative tasks to include workforce planning, continuous training, multi-dimensional evaluation, career development, motivation, and talent retention. Furthermore, future studies should develop analytical frameworks suited to Vietnam's context but in harmony with global trends such as KPI-based governance, teaching-research contracts, and digital ecosystems for professional development.

6. CONCLUSION

Through a comprehensive review of research on human resource and faculty management in the context of higher education, this article has identified key theoretical foundations and current academic gaps in Vietnam. While the HRM theoretical system has achieved significant progress globally, with models such as competency-based management, performance management, and sustainable HRM research specifically addressing faculty management in Vietnam remains fragmented, overly administrative, and lacking a strategic perspective.

Building on this analysis, the article proposes future research directions that focus on constructing a dedicated theoretical framework for faculty management. This framework should integrate the demands of internationalization, digital transformation, and the socio-cultural and institutional specificities of Vietnam. It also calls for expanding qualitative research on faculty motivation, academic roles, and experimenting with performance-based governance and continuous career development models. These research directions will contribute to strengthening theory and enhancing the policy-making process for faculty development during the current period of higher education reform.

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