

Improving The Quality of Public University Lecturers in Hanoi City Through Government Policy

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ABSTRACT

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The quality of public university lecturers plays a decisive role in enhancing the competitiveness and academic reputation of higher education institutions. In the context of educational globalization and digital transformation, many countries have issued strategic policies to develop lecturers in a professional, integrated and creative direction. This study focuses on comparing public university lecturer development policies between Vietnam and some typical countries (Japan, Singapore and South Korea), thereby drawing lessons and recommending appropriate policies for Vietnam. The results show that effective policies must simultaneously ensure stable financial investment, transparent capacity assessment mechanisms, competitive remuneration policies, and a continuous training system, linked to international standards.

Keywords: Lecturer; Public university; Government Policy; Vietnam

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of higher education playing an increasingly central role in national development strategies, the quality of the teaching staff has become a decisive factor for the competitiveness and academic reputation of public higher education institutions. Many countries in the world, especially in Asia, have clearly identified the strategic role of lecturers and issued national policies to attract, develop and retain high-quality academic human resources.

In Vietnam, the quality of public university lecturers is still inadequate, reflected in the imbalance in professional structure, limited research capacity, and low level of international integration. Current policies, despite many efforts to innovate, are still inconsistent and have not created a truly strong motivation to develop the teaching staff in a professional and international standard direction.

According to the Law on Higher Education 2012 (National Assembly, 2012), university lecturers must meet standards of professional ethics, health and professional qualifications. However, policy implementation is still dominated by administrative mechanisms, lack of mechanisms for assessing real capacity and remuneration policies that are not commensurate with the requirements of educational reform. This situation does not only occur at individual universities but also reflects limitations in vision and policy-making capacity at the macro level.

Recognizing that the government plays a key role in creating an environment for academic human resource development, this paper conducts a comparative study between Vietnam and three typical countries in the Asian region Japan, South Korea, and Singapore – to clarify how governments are using public policies to improve the quality of public university lecturers. Through analyzing aspects such as recruitment, remuneration, assessment, and career development policies, the study aims to draw policy implications that can be appropriately applied in the current context of Vietnam.

The study uses qualitative analysis combined with policy document research to compare policy models among selected countries. Thereby, the article not only provides a comprehensive view of the role of the government in developing the teaching staff, but also contributes to promoting policy dialogue to improve the quality of public higher education in Vietnam in the integration period.

Stemming from the central role of public policy in shaping and developing the public university faculty, this study raises the core question: “How does government policy impact the quality of public university faculty in Vietnam

compared to some typical Asian countries?”

To clarify this question, the study is divided into the following three questions:

What policy tools are governments using to develop public university faculty?

How is the effectiveness of these policies reflected in the quality of the teaching staff, in terms of criteria such as teaching capacity, research capacity and level of international integration?

How can Vietnam learn and adjust policies to improve the effectiveness of management and development of teaching staff in the context of global educational integration?

2. RESEARCH OVERVIEW

a. Concept of university lecturer

Lecturers at public universities in Vietnam are defined as civil servants working in public service units, subject to the provisions of the 2010 Law on Civil Servants and related legal documents. According to the provisions of Article 2 of the Law on Civil Servants, civil servants are Vietnamese citizens recruited according to job positions, working at public service units under the employment contract regime and receiving salaries from the salary fund of the public service unit according to the provisions of law. This affirms that public university lecturers are professional civil servants, undertaking teaching and scientific research work in public higher education institutions.

The Law on Higher Education 2012, amended and supplemented in 2018, stipulates in Article 54 that a lecturer in a higher education institution is a person with a clear identity; good qualities and ethics; good health to perform duties; and qualifications meeting the provisions of this Law and the regulations on organization and operation of the higher education institution. The titles of lecturers include teaching assistant, lecturer, senior lecturer, associate professor and professor. The standard qualification for the title of lecturer teaching at the university level is a master's degree or higher, except for teaching assistants.

Joint Circular No. 36/2014/TTLT-BGDĐT-BNV dated November 28, 2014 of the Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Home Affairs stipulates codes and standards for professional titles of teaching staff in public higher education institutions. Accordingly, the professional titles of lecturers are divided into three ranks: lecturer (rank III, code V.07.01.03), senior lecturer (rank II, code V.07.01.02) and senior lecturer (rank I, code V.07.01.01). Each rank has specific standards on training level, professional capacity, work experience and other requirements appropriate to the tasks of teaching and scientific research.

Recently, Circular No. 05/2024/TT-BGDĐT dated June 1, 2024 stipulates the standards and conditions for considering promotion to professional titles of teaching staff in public higher education institutions. This Circular aims to specify the standards and conditions for teaching staff to be considered for promotion to a higher professional title, in accordance with their capacity, qualifications and work experience.

From the above regulations, the concept can be drawn: lecturers in public higher education institutions are civil servants recruited according to job positions and professional titles, working under a contract regime, with clear personal background; good qualities and ethics; good health; standard professional and technical skills and abilities; undertaking teaching, scientific research and other activities in a training major of a public university. This concept does not apply to guest lecturers.

b. Teaching staff of public universities

The teaching staff of public universities in Vietnam is the core force in the higher education system, taking on the role of teaching, scientific research and participating in educational management. They are recruited according to job positions, working at public service units under the employment contract regime, receiving salaries from the salary fund of the public service unit according to the provisions of law.

In a narrow sense, the teaching staff of public universities is a group of teachers who teach, conduct scientific research and manage education at public universities, receiving salaries and other benefits from the state budget.

In a broad sense, the public university teaching staff are academic professionals, civil servants who teach at college and

university levels and above, organized into a force, sharing the same tasks, implementing educational goals set for that group. They work with a plan, bonded together through the educational environment, through material and spiritual benefits within the legal framework.

Thus, the teaching staff of public universities in Vietnam includes those who meet the standards of lecturers, regardless of nationality, who are signed to teach from university level and above, organized into a team, carrying out the goals and tasks of training, scientific research, management... according to the plan. They work and bond together through the educational environment, material and spiritual benefits within the framework of the State's policies and laws.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The research's analytical framework is built on the model of "input, output, impact policy", combined with the theory of human capital development in higher education policy. Accordingly, public policy factors are considered "inputs" in the process of developing the teaching staff, with three main pillars:

Recruitment policy and professional standards: Includes regulations on qualifications, abilities, professional ethics and input standards of lecturers.

Professional development and training policy: Relates to postgraduate study opportunities, international scholarships, postdoctoral training, and research capacity development programs.

Compensation and performance evaluation policy: Linked to the salary and bonus system, teaching and research performance evaluation mechanism, along with career advancement opportunities.

The outputs of these policies will be analyzed based on three groups of indicators on faculty quality:

Academic and professional qualifications; Scientific research capacity and international publications; Level of participation in regional and global academic networks. Finally, the analytical framework will contrast the differences between Vietnam and selected countries (Japan, Singapore, South Korea) to point out strengths, weaknesses and policy factors that can be adjusted.

The study applied the comparative qualitative research method (Qualitative Comparative Policy Analysis), focusing on content analysis of higher education policies and faculty development programs in Vietnam and three typical countries: Japan, Singapore and Korea.

The reasons for choosing these three countries are: Japan represents a long-standing model of higher education, combining academic tradition and modern reform; Singapore is a model of educational reform towards marketization and innovation; South Korea is a country that has transformed itself dramatically through investment in higher education and research, with strong leadership from the central government.

Data was collected from three main sources:

Public policy and legal documents from each country's higher education regulatory agencies (MOET, MEXT, MOE Singapore, and Ministry of Education Korea);

Academic studies and thematic reports from organizations such as UNESCO, OECD, World Bank;

International scientific works have been published on the topic of faculty development and university administration.

The collected data will be coded according to each policy theme, classified according to the three pillars in the analytical framework. The study uses the Most Similar, Most Different Systems Design method to identify policy elements that can be applied to Vietnam flexibly, without mechanical stereotypes, while ensuring institutional and educational cultural suitability.

4. RESULTS STUDY

4.1. Descriptive statistics

In Hanoi city, the system of public universities is distributed according to the following governing bodies:

Table 1. Number of public universities in Hanoi

Governing body	Number of schools	Rate (%)
Ministry of Education and Training	33	57.89
Vietnam National University, Hanoi	8	14.04
Other Ministries and Branches	15	26.32
Hanoi City People's Committee	1	1.75
Total	57	100

(Source: Ministry of Education and Training, 2025)

Of the 47 public universities in Hanoi, the Ministry of Education and Training directly manages 33, accounting for 70.2% of the total. This reflects the central role of the Ministry in coordinating and developing the higher education system in the capital. This concentration can facilitate the implementation of synchronous and effective educational policies. With 8 member universities, Hanoi National University accounts for 17.0% of the total number of public universities in Hanoi. As one of the two national universities in the country, Hanoi National University plays an important role in high-quality training and scientific research, contributing to enhancing the position of Vietnamese higher education in the international arena.

Table 2. Number of lecturers at public universities in Hanoi

Governing body	Number of schools	Number of lecturers
Ministry of Education and Training	33	13,200
Vietnam National University, Hanoi	8	3,200
Other Ministries and Branches	15	6,000
Hanoi City People's Committee	1	400
Total	57	22,800

(Source: Ministry of Education and Training, 2025)

With a total of 57 public universities, the teaching staff in Hanoi is estimated at around 22,800 people. This reflects the strong development of the capital's higher education system, meeting the country's demand for training high-quality human resources.

4.2. Current status of improving the quality of public university lecturers in Hanoi city through Government policies

First, about policy thinking

Japan and South Korea: Long-term strategic thinking, investing in teachers as “national knowledge infrastructure”.

In Japan and South Korea, university lecturers are considered a key “knowledge asset”, the locomotive leading the knowledge economy, playing a key role in the national innovation chain. The governments of these countries do not simply stop at managing the teaching staff with administrative regulations, but build a national strategy for developing academic human resources. Through the “21st Century University Development Program”, South Korea has invested billions of dollars to support lecturers in research, study abroad, technology transfer and promote international publication. Japan is not far behind with programs such as the “Top Global University Project”, in which

lecturers are the center of the strategy to improve the ranking and level of universities in the international arena.

It is worth noting that, in these countries, faculty development is inseparable from the goal of enhancing national competitiveness. Faculty are not only encouraged to engage in teaching but also strongly supported to engage in research, technology transfer, and innovation a comprehensive approach that sees them as the driving force for the sustainable development of the knowledge-based economy.

Singapore: Marketization and integration of teachers into the innovation value chain

While Japan and South Korea have chosen to develop lecturers in an academically intensive manner, Singapore has created a unique hybrid model between state-directed and market-driven mechanisms. Lecturers in universities such as NUS and NTU are not only individual teachers or researchers, but also economic agents – they are encouraged to establish startups, transfer technology to businesses, and participate in innovation projects with industry. The system of evaluating, rewarding and developing lecturers in Singapore is therefore not administratively leveled, but is designed to be close to the market: those who create more value for society will be rewarded accordingly.

Thanks to this “market-driven” approach, Singaporean lecturers are not confined to a closed academic environment, but have truly become a dynamic link in the industrial research education value chain. This is the point where Vietnam is still confused, when the university operating mechanism still focuses on internal management, heavy on compliance, light on innovation.

Administrative regulatory thinking, lack of long-term investment strategy

In contrast to the three countries above, policy thinking in Vietnam towards the teaching staff is still at the level of “administrative personnel management”, that is, focusing on salary regimes, staffing levels, training targets, and title rankings, but not considering this as a strategic academic resource. Current policies for teaching staff development are still mainly about budget allocation, administrativeizing the doctoral training process, and standardizing in a formal direction (for example, requiring the number of articles, number of teaching hours, etc.), while not creating an internal driving force for academic development. The core problem is that we have not yet thoroughly answered the question: Who should university lecturers be in the national development ecosystem?

If we continue to maintain the mindset of “regulation” instead of “development”, Vietnam will fall into a vicious circle: lecturers lack motivation to research, do not create breakthroughs, higher education does not improve quality a knowledge economy cannot be formed. Meanwhile, Japan, South Korea and Singapore have overcome this stage decades ago by shifting the role of the state from management to creation.

Second, on compensation policy and performance evaluation

Japan, Korea, Singapore: Fair competition rewarding according to output. In Japan and Korea, the salary and bonus system for lecturers has completely changed from a “static” to a “dynamic” model, meaning that lecturers' income no longer depends mainly on seniority or title, but is determined by clear quantitative criteria on performance: quantity and quality of international publications, funded research projects, technology transfer activities, teaching effectiveness and student feedback, and contribution to curriculum development. Lecturers are evaluated as “professional teaching researchers”, with specific KPIs and corresponding reward mechanisms.

In Singapore, the remuneration policy is also more deeply marketized. Lecturers not only have competitive basic salaries but also have the opportunity to receive performance-based bonuses and large research investments if they have outstanding achievements. Universities such as NUS or NTU design a “flexible salary band” policy to facilitate the retention of talent, including competition with the business sector or international universities. It is worth noting that the publicization of assessment criteria helps create a transparent competitive environment, encouraging lecturers to continuously improve their personal capacity, while raising the quality of universities to a new level.

Vietnam: Fixed Wage Coefficients Institutionalized Stagnation

In stark contrast, the salary system in Vietnam is still tied to the mindset of civil servant management, with fixed salary coefficients, linked to seniority and ranks, which hardly reflect the practical value that lecturers create. A young lecturer, who regularly publishes internationally, participates in research projects and creates modern learning materials will most likely have a lower income than a senior lecturer who almost stops at pure teaching work, with

little academic contribution. This leads to a bitter paradox: contributing a lot does not mean being paid appropriately, and thus, academic motivation is eroded over the years.

The current policy also lacks a systematic mechanism for evaluating scientific and teaching performance. Evaluation criteria are still formalistic, lacking in quantification and not creating pressure for improvement. Lecturers are therefore prone to falling into a state of “career security” – they do not need to strive to keep their positions. Meanwhile, those with capacity and ambition feel stuck, not recognized or rewarded properly, leading to a brain drain trend, especially from the public sector to the private sector or abroad.

The growing gap between public and private universities

The sluggishness in remuneration and performance evaluation policies is the root cause of the Vietnamese public university sector’s increasing loss of attraction to talent. Meanwhile, private universities, especially those with foreign investment or strong market orientation, have begun to implement performance-based salary, product-based bonuses, and periodic evaluations according to international standards. Financial flexibility and autonomy in personnel management allow them to attract a quality teaching force, even recruiting lecturers from the public sector.

Without timely reform, the public sector, once considered the “backbone” of the higher education system, will fall behind in both quality and prestige. Even more dangerous, this will create a divided academic environment: some public schools stagnate, some private schools break through – leading to consequences of inequality in access to knowledge, which is a core principle of modern education.

Performance-based compensation – a necessary and urgent turning point

The current policy of remuneration and performance evaluation of lecturers cannot continue to be “uniform”. A revolution in salary design is needed towards fairness, flexibility and transparency, where good performers are rewarded and poor performers are forced to improve. It is necessary to free the teaching staff from the administrative-heavy rank system and give educational institutions real autonomy in developing criteria for rewards and punishments.

Vietnam cannot build world-class universities if it continues to maintain the mindset of “increasing salaries based on age”. It is time to face up and speak the truth: Without reforming the remuneration policy, we cannot retain talented people. And when talented people leave, knowledge also leaves. The question is no longer “should we do it or not”, but if we do not do it now, when will we have time?

Third, on professional development policy

Singapore and South Korea: Comprehensive and practical professional development ecosystems. Both Singapore and South Korea have developed a systematic, practical, and strategic professional development system for faculty. In South Korea, the government not only supports domestic postgraduate training but also strongly encourages young faculty to study abroad through programs such as Brain Korea 21 (BK21). Notably, these programs are all linked to clear career paths, commitments to repay or serve domestically for a certain period of time, specific output assessments, and competitive funding based on performance. This helps avoid budget waste while ensuring the effective use of investment resources.

Singapore has gone further by creating an ecosystem of professional development embedded in the national strategy for high-quality human resources. Universities in Singapore are funded by the state but have full control over who is sent to study, where, with clear conditions for knowledge transfer, post-training application, and contributions back to the school and the country. More importantly, lecturers are not only encouraged to continue their doctoral and post-doctoral studies, but are also sponsored to participate in short-term specialized training courses at technology centers, businesses, and international research institutes. It is the close connection between the school the state the market that has created a continuous chain of academic values, helping lecturers to constantly develop and keep up with international standards.

In contrast, in Vietnam, although programs such as Project 89 on training lecturers with doctoral degrees at home and abroad were launched with ambitious goals, the actual implementation has revealed many shortcomings. First is the excessive administrative status: cumbersome procedures for requesting funding, multiple levels of approval,

and lack of flexibility, discouraging potential candidates. Many lecturers reflect that the process of applying for study is more like an “administrative obstacle course” than a policy of encouraging learning.

In addition, there is a situation of slow disbursement and inconsistency between ministries and branches. Universities often cannot proactively send lecturers for training because they have to wait for instructions from higher-level agencies, funding is slow to arrive, and regulations are contradictory, leading to wasted time and learning opportunities. As a result, many competent and enthusiastic lecturers are “trapped” in a half-hearted mechanism, leading to a professional lag compared to the regional level.

Another fatal weakness is the lack of clear responsibility and career planning. Many people are sponsored to study but after returning, they are not assigned suitable jobs and do not have the opportunity to develop their abilities, leading to a situation of “wasted public investment”. Some people even choose to quit their jobs or move to the private sector where they feel they have more room to use their talents. This shows that the current policy lacks a connection between “training use development”.

Fourth, on the level of autonomy and accountability

Singapore, South Korea, Japan: Strong empowerment, transparency and output requirements. In these countries, universities are given extensive autonomy in human resource management: from recruitment, appointment, contract signing, performance evaluation to dismissal of lecturers if they do not meet requirements. This is not arbitrary power but a right associated with a dual accountability mechanism: accountability to the state through quantitative criteria (research output, teaching, social contribution, technology transfer), and internal accountability to the university council, executive board, as well as the academic community.

Specifically, in Singapore, schools such as NUS or NTU have full authority to decide on the appointment of lecturers according to a clear career path: from Assistant Professor to Full Professor, based on a record of achievements that is strictly evaluated by an independent professional council. Korea and Japan also apply a periodic lecturer evaluation system, linked to KPIs and a clear reward mechanism. If a lecturer fails to meet the requirements after two evaluation cycles, the contract may not be renewed. This promotes positive competition, improving the quality of teaching and research in a substantial way.

The highlight is that the government does not directly intervene in each specific decision, but builds a system of output standards and an audit mechanism. Schools are given autonomy within the framework of a pre-determined national strategy. This is a fundamental shift: from “input and process management” to “results-based governance”.

4.3. Some solutions to improve the quality of public university lecturers in Hanoi city through Government policies

(1). Develop and promulgate a quantitative and highly applicable professional standards framework for lecturers.

The Government should soon develop and promulgate a professional standards framework for public university lecturers in the direction of quantifying criteria for assessing professional capacity. This framework must fully reflect the requirements for professional qualifications, pedagogical capacity, scientific research capacity, level of technology application in teaching, and international integration capacity. The criteria should be specified into measurable indicators, applied uniformly to all public universities in Hanoi. This will both create a fair assessment tool and help each lecturer clearly identify their personal development path at each stage. At the same time, the framework will be the basis for adjusting recruitment, training, fostering and appointment policies, helping to unify the direction of staff development throughout the city.

(2). Implement compensation based on performance instead of seniority.

One of the biggest barriers to developing public university lecturers in Hanoi today is the flat remuneration system, which depends on seniority and administrative rank, instead of reflecting the true value of each individual's contribution. The government needs to direct the development of a flexible salary and bonus mechanism, linked to specific work performance such as: quantity and quality of scientific publications, level of innovation in teaching methods, student satisfaction, and contribution to the academic community. Implementing a performance-based remuneration system will create positive competition within the team, attract talent and retain competent lecturers.

To ensure fairness and transparency, it is necessary to simultaneously establish a periodic performance assessment system, with the participation of many parties (lecturers, colleagues, students, schools) with a clear process and an objective evidence database.

(3). Strategic investment in developing lecturers' professional capacity

The government should have a clear and consistent investment strategy for professional development for public university lecturers in Hanoi, considering this a national priority. Instead of being scattered and formal, training and development programs should be designed according to the career life cycle, including domestic and foreign postgraduate scholarships, research internship programs at international academic institutions, short-term training courses on educational technology, digital skills, teaching innovation, as well as international publication skills. In addition, there should be a mechanism to bind post-training responsibilities, linking the interests of lecturers with the development of the school. In particular, key universities in Hanoi need to be prioritized for investment to become centers for developing academic resources, playing a role in retraining and spreading capacity to other units in the city and the whole country.

(4). Strengthening autonomy in recruiting, appointing and evaluating lecturers

One of the breakthrough solutions is to give public universities full autonomy in human resources, including recruitment, appointment, evaluation and reward of lecturers. The current rigid administrative management mechanism is seriously limiting the ability to select talented people, especially in the competitive environment of high-quality human resources between the public and private sectors. The government needs to issue regulations that allow schools to be flexible in determining recruitment criteria in accordance with their own development strategies; organize competitive exams and periodic assessments based on academic output instead of mere degrees and certificates. At the same time, accountability requirements need to be enhanced, ensuring that personnel decisions are public, transparent, and comply with independent evaluation processes, minimizing the risk of group interests or personal bias.

(5). Connecting faculty with the innovation ecosystem and the business sector

Lecturers are not only the ones who impart knowledge in the classroom but also the agents who spread innovation to society. To promote this role, the Government needs to develop policies to connect lecturers with the startup, innovation, and business ecosystems through applied research funding mechanisms, support the commercialization of research results, and promote three-way cooperation: schools businesses the state. Hanoi, with its advantages in the network of research institutes, innovation centers, and high-tech enterprises, needs to be planned as an academic industrial technological linkage area. Lecturers participating in applied research projects, business training, or technology transfer need to be recognized as an official part of the assessment of career achievements and additional income. Thereby, the quality of teaching is linked to practice, enhancing students' adaptability and enhancing the position of public universities in the knowledge value chain.

5. CONCLUSION

The quality of public university faculty is not only a measure of a country's academic level but also a pillar supporting all ambitions for educational reform and social knowledge development. Through a comparative study of policies in three typical Asian countries, Japan, South Korea and Singapore, the article has shown that success in faculty development does not stem from reform slogans or discrete policy documents, but from a consistent, persistent policy mindset that is capable of creating endogenous motivation for academics.

Vietnam, and in particular Hanoi City as the leading city in the public university system, is facing a crucial turning point: either continue to maintain the administrative, passive and short-term management model; or embark on a process of deep reform, based on the principles of efficiency, responsibility and autonomy. The article asserts that only with proactive, strategic and consistent intervention from the Government through redesigning policies on recruitment, remuneration, career development and assessment can the teaching staff truly transform themselves into the core force of high-quality higher education.

Ultimately, education reform, no matter where it starts, comes down to one thing: people. And if teachers are not

trusted, not properly invested in, not freed from administrative barriers, then any reform will only stop at the surface. It is time to look back frankly, act decisively, and invest wisely in the very team that is steering the ship of national knowledge.

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