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Motivation to improve quality of university lecturers in Vietnam

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Abstract: Work motivation is one of the factors that greatly affects work results and efficiency, then the quality of human resources in an organization in general and human resources as university lecturers in particular. It has been confirmed by studies that work motivation includes both material factors (salary, bonus, monetary benefits) and spiritual factors (opportunities to develop professional and career capacity; rewards, honor). When an organization's human resources are cared for materially and spiritually, they will be satisfied and develop their working competence, contributing to the organization development. This study analyzes the work motivation of human resources with high professional qualifications, considered the quintessence of human resources - university lecturers. In terms of creating work motivation, in this study, two factors associated with the professional characteristics of lecturers are addressed on, including creating motivation to develop qualifications and teaching capacity and creating motivation to develop scientific research capacity; The impact of these two factors on the quality of university lecturers is specifically analyzed. Based on the theoretical framework, a survey was conducted with 150 lecturers from 3 public universities and 150 lecturers from 3 non-public universities to identify correlation between the creation of motivation in practice and quality of university lecturers in Vietnam. Findings suggests appropriate adjustments to policies so that Vietnamese lecturers' quality could be encouraged to meet the development requirements of society.

Keywords: *Scientific research capacity, Teaching capacity, University lecturers, Vietnam.*

1. Introduction

University lecturer is the common job title of lecturers working in universities, colleges, academies, institutes (research institutes providing doctoral training), and colleges according to the provisions of the Law on Vietnamese Higher Education (VNA, 2012). Currently, the system of universities, colleges, academies, institutes, and colleges (collectively referred to as universities) in Vietnam includes 327 units (MOET, 2024) with specific regulations on the scope and field of research, training and technology transfer activities.

It is the fact that Vietnam is a developing country with the population of 100.3 million people by 2023 (GSO, 2024); however, the quality of Vietnamese labour is still ranked at low, not sufficient enough to meet the labour market requirements (Hoa, V.P., 2023). This context has created opportunities for universities to develop human resource training strategies for the country's socio-economic development, but also put pressure on them with requirements of improving lecturer quality, ensuring training quality to meet labour market requirements.

Making improvements on the quality of lecturers is an urgent requirement and a strategic goal for universities. Of many measures to realize this goal, beside creating motivation to lecturers with policies of material and spiritual supports, creating motivation to develop their qualifications, teaching capacity, and scientific research capacity is considered more meaningful and associated with their professional characteristics. This is also the topic of interest and choice in this study.

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2. Literature Review

Lecturers are identified as the special labor in the society because their responsibilities are to directly train human resources for society. Therefore, quality of lecturers has great significance to universities as well as the labor market; has a great influence on the development of universities themselves in terms of both competitiveness and product and service quality. It has been confirmed in different studies that lecturers are human resources required of professional qualifications and ethical qualities at high level (Christopher, B.M. et al., 2013); Their work is intellectual, artistic and creative activities (Multi, S., 2014); Their main task is providing teaching activities and scientific researches; and the value of lecturers is affirmed when they demonstrate their moral qualities, qualifications, and teaching capacity (Xuan, T.T., 2020). These values are often clearly stipulated by the laws in countries, serving as a basis for universities to recruit, employ and evaluate the quality of lecturers. At the same time, those values must be revealed when they participate in professional activities serving for the development of universities. Those values produce the quality of the teaching staff – university lecturers. According to Trung, N.S. et al. (2021), lecturer is understood as the professional title of those working in the field of teaching and research in higher education institutions; Quality of lecturers is explained with: Ethical qualities, professional qualifications and expertise, scientific research capacity, and teaching capacity. Those elements are used to regulates professional standards and evaluation standards to quality of lecturers by laws in Vietnam (VNA, 2012; MOET, 2014).

Overall, it can be seen that quality of lecturers is a value expressed through ethical qualities, professional qualifications, and working capacity to meet prescribed job title standards and professional requirements for the university development. Hence, the research scale "The quality of lecturers" (QL) could be developed, expressed in general terms, including: Lecturers have good moral qualities, are responsible for assigned tasks, respect the personality of learners, show fairness to learners, and protect the legitimate rights of learners (QL1); Lecturers have professional qualifications and teaching capacity as required and are constantly studying to improve their professional qualifications and expertise to meet the development trend of modern higher education (QL2); Lecturers achieve required scientific research capacity and constantly carry out researches and apply technology transfer to support their teaching activities and the university development strategies (QL3).

In general, the research perspective clearly demonstrates three factors that constitute quality of lecturers: Ethical qualities; professional qualifications, teaching capacity and scientific research capacity. Of these factors, ethical qualities belong to political standard, consistent with the political and cultural characteristics of each country, and is emphasized as a common standard of university lecturers. Therefore, this study is interested in improving quality of lecturers with two main factors: Professional qualifications and teaching capacity; scientific research capacity. When these two factors and policies to create motivation to lecturers in terms of these two aspects are in much consideration of universities, there will be improvement of the quality of lecturers for university development goals. The enhancement made to professional qualifications, teaching capacity and scientific research capacity for lecturers can be explained as bellows:

- Firstly, it is necessary to develop the professional qualifications and teaching capacity of lecturers with policies associated with characteristics of teaching profession, training majors and practical capabilities of universities. Standards for professional qualifications and capacity of lecturers generally regulated in terms of legal aspects (VNA, 2012; VG, 2019) in Vietnam include: master degree of the in – charge - training major, pedagogical certificate, approval for qualified teaching capacity before performing official teaching activities; Universities' responsibilities of creating conditions for lecturers to improve their professional qualifications and develop teaching capacity in accordance with the actual situation. According to these legal regulations, there have been studies carried out in Vietnam (Huong, N.T.T, 2012; Trung, N.S. et al., 2021), addressing on measures to promote/motivate university lecturers' professional qualifications and teaching capacity, from which the scale "Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' teaching qualifications and capacity" (QC) of this study can be built and explained: Lecturers are

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encouraged/supported by policies (funding support, time priority) to study and improve their professional qualifications at the doctoral level (QC1); Lecturers are encouraged/supported by policies to gain experience/professional practice at appropriate and reputable higher education institutions to develop teaching capacity to serve their university development (QC2); Lecturers are recognized, rewarded and supported by professional development policies after completing the doctoral course to improve their professional qualifications (QC3).

- Secondly, scientific research capacity of lecturers can be upgraded with policies associated with characteristics of teaching profession, training majors and practical capabilities of universities. Standards for scientific research capacity of lecturers generally regulated in terms of legal aspects (VNA, 2012; VG, 2019) in Vietnam include: Research capacity and research performance to serve professional teaching activities; The applicability of research results to serve lecturers' career development and strategic goals of universities; Universities' responsibilities of creating conditions for lecturers to conduct scientific researches, apply, transfer scientific research results, and develop lecturers' scientific research capacity in accordance with the actual situation of universities. According to some experts (Uoc, T.M, 2013; Duc, N.M, 2013; Trung, N.S. et al., 2021), in addition to general policies prescribed by law, specific policies to promote/motivate lecturers' scientific research capacity should come from universities themselves. Therefore, the scale "Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' scientific research capacity" (RC) can be synthesized as: Lecturers are encouraged/supported by policies (funding support, time priority) to conduct scientific researches and develop their scientific research capacity with appropriate and feasible programs, projects, and research topics, serving academic development for both individuals and universities (RC1); Lecturers are encouraged/supported by policies to exchange academic or scientific research experiences at appropriate and reputable higher education institutions and research facilities for academic development for both individuals and universities (RC2); Lecturers are recognized, rewarded and supported with professional development policies on the basis of scientific research achievements, research contributions and research cooperation of individuals and universities (RC3).

With regards to theoretical and practical research of university administration, improvement of professional qualifications, teaching capacity and scientific research capacity are important and meaningful factors for both universities and lecturers. That significant policies to motivate lecturers to improve their professional qualifications, teaching capacity and scientific research capacity are implemented by universities is crucial means of making improvements on the quality of lecturers, and also the quality of training and reputation of universities. Hence, hypothesis for this study can be: *Creating motivation to enhance university lecturers' professional qualifications and teaching capacity (H1) and creating motivation to develop university lecturers' scientific research capacity (H2) are essential measures, which decisively and positively influence on improving the quality of lecturers, earning training quality and reputation for universities.*

Based on the literature review, the theoretical framework for research on motivation to improve the quality of university lecturers can be built with a 3-scale model towards evaluating the impacts of motivational policies on improving lecturers' professional qualifications and teaching capacity for development of their working quality: 02 scales - independent variables, including "Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' professional qualifications and teaching capacity" (QC) and "Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' scientific research capacity" (RC); 01 scale - dependent variable "The quality of lecturers" (QL). The above scales include 9 observed variables, designed into 9 questions in the survey questionnaire and measured using a 5-level Likert scale: 1 - Strongly disagree; 2 - Disagree; 3 - No opinion; 4 - Agree; 5 - Strongly agree (Table 1, Figure 1).

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Table 1.
Research theoretical framework.

No	Scales	Encode	Rating levels				
			1	2	3	4	5
I	Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' teaching qualifications and capacity	QC					
1	Lecturers are encouraged/Supported by policies (Funding support, time priority) to study and improve their professional qualifications at the doctoral level.	QC1					
2	Lecturers are encouraged/Supported by policies to gain experience/Professional practice at appropriate and reputable higher education institutions to develop teaching capacity to serve their university development.	QC2					
3	Lecturers are recognized, rewarded and supported by professional development policies after completing the doctoral course to improve their professional qualifications.	QC3					
II	Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' scientific research capacity	RC					
4	Lecturers are encouraged/Supported by policies (Funding support, time priority) to conduct scientific researches and develop their scientific research capacity with appropriate and feasible programs, projects, and research topics, serving academic development for both individuals and universities.	RC1					
5	Lecturers are encouraged/Supported by policies to exchange academic or scientific research experiences at appropriate and reputable higher education institutions and research facilities for academic development for both individuals and universities.	RC2					
6	Lecturers are recognized, rewarded and supported with professional development policies on the basis of scientific research achievements, research contributions and research cooperation of individuals and universities.	RC3					
III	The quality of lecturers	QL					
7	Lecturers have good moral qualities, are responsible for assigned tasks, respect the personality of learners, show fairness to learners, and protect the legitimate rights of learners.	QL1					
8	Lecturers have professional qualifications and teaching capacity as required and are constantly studying to improve their professional qualifications and expertise to meet the development trend of modern higher education.	QL2					
9	Lecturers achieve required scientific research capacity and constantly carry out researches and apply technology transfer to support their teaching activities and the university development strategies.	QL3					

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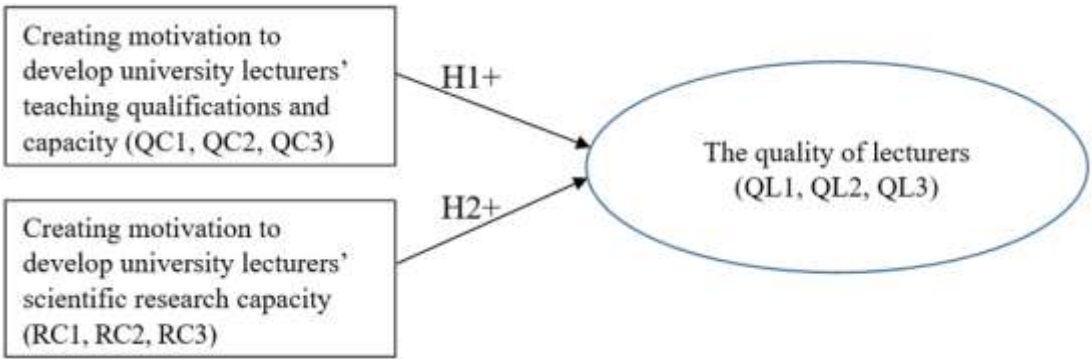

Figure 1.
Research model.

3. Methodology

In addition to collecting and analyzing secondary data to build up the literature review for the study, primary data is collected and analyzed through a direct survey of the opinions of 150 lecturers from 3 public universities and 150 lecturers from 3 non-public universities. With a research model of 03 scales including 9 observed variables, according to Hai, D.H. (2019), the minimum sample size needed for regression analysis is N = 9*5 = 45. In fact, this study is conducted with a sample size of N = 150 lecturers from 3 public universities (N > 45) and N = 150 lecturers from 3 non-public universities (N > 45), showing high reliability when conducting survey research.

The survey was conducted selectively with survey respondents who are 300 lecturers with doctoral degrees or currently participating in doctoral studies. The preliminary interviews were performed to collect information about the participants, then the survey questionnaires were distributed based on their agreement to answer. The survey results received 300/300 valid responses, reaching a 100% response rate. With the collected data, the scale testing and regression analysis were carried out to test the relationship of the scales and draw research conclusions.

4. Findings

From the survey data collected from 300 lecturers, Cronbach' Alpha is tested to identify the reliability of the scales and observed variables in the research model. In quantitative research, scales are reliable in case of meeting the standard Cronbach 'alpha > 0.6; Observed variables are reliable if they meet the standard condition of Corrected Item-Total Correlation > 0.3 (Hai, D.H., 2019). The test results show that all 3 scales and 9 observed variables in the initial research model are reliable for further analysis [Table 2].

Table 2.
Statistical results and scale testing results.

Scales	Observed variables	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. deviation	Cronbach' alpha	Corrected item-total correlation
1. Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' teaching qualifications and capacity (QC)	QC1	300	3	5	4.32	0.622	0.606	QC1 = 0.464
	QC2	300	1	5	3.59	0.668		QC2 = 0.374
	QC3	300	1	5	3.81	0.665		QC3 = 0.382

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Scales	Observed variables	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. deviation	Cronbach' alpha	Corrected item-total correlation
2. Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' scientific research capacity (RC)	RC1	300	3	5	4.22	0.639	0.632	RC1 = 0.525
	RC2	300	1	5	3.62	0.708		RC2 = 0.421
	RC3	300	2	5	3.77	0.679		RC3 = 0.449
3. The quality of lecturers (QL)	QL1	300	3	5	4.27	0.603	0.647	QL1 = 0.609
	QL2	300	3	5	3.92	0.621		QL2 = 0.574
	QL3	300	2	5	3.98	0.616		QL3 = 0.569
Valid N (Listwise)		300						

The data from Table 2 shows observations of the scale "Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' professional qualifications and teaching capacity" (QC), "Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' scientific research capacity" (RC), "The quality of lecturers" (QL) are all rated at an average level of Mean > 3.59, which is statistically significant according to the defined Likert scale (1-5).

However, there is a difference among the observations of the two scales "Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' professional qualifications and teaching capacity" (QC), "Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' scientific research capacity" (RC):

+ Observations at a high level: QC1 = 4.32, RC1 = 4.22, reveals that universities show interests in building and implementing incentive/support policies (funding support, time priority) for lecturers to improve their professional qualifications at the doctoral level and their scientific research capacity with appropriate and feasible programs, projects, and research topics for both individuals' improvements of professional qualifications, teaching capacity and academic activities and universities' development.

+ Low level observations: QC2 = 3.59, RC2 = 3.62, showing that lecturers receive little encouragement/policy support for professional practice (in teaching, research) in reputable educational institutions, universities, and research units to develop teaching capacity and scientific research capacity for both individuals' improvements of professional qualifications, teaching capacity and academic activities and universities' development.

+ Observations at a low level: QC3 = 3.81, RC3 = 3.77, show that lecturers receive little recognition, rewards and professional development policies after completing professional advancement programs for a doctorate; after making efforts for scientific research achievements, research contributions and research cooperation of individuals and universities.

With the scale test value and the observed variables meeting the standards, the regression analysis is performed to examine the relationship between the independent variables "Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' professional qualifications and teaching capacity" (QC), "Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' scientific research capacity" (RC) and the dependent variable "the quality of lecturers" (QL) [Table 3].

Table 3.
Multivariate regression results.

Coefficients[a]								
		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients			Collinearity statistics	
Model		B	Std. error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1. Public university	(Constant)	0.801	0.362		4.062	0.000		
	QC	0.378	0.089	0.316	3.759	0.000	0.552	1.713

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Coefficients[a]								
		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients			Collinearity statistics	
Model		B	Std. error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
lecturers (N=150) R^2 = 0.668 Durbin-Watson = 2.022	RC	0.473	0.084	0.388	3.564	0.000	0.584	1.713
2. Non-public university lecturers (N=150) R^2 = 0.675 Durbin-Watson = 2.105	(Constant)	0.815	0.395		4.107	0.000		
	QC	0.339	0.078	0.312	3.851	0.000	0.635	1.704
	RC	0.458	0.071	0.367	3.535	0.000	0.773	1.704

Note: a. Dependent variable: The quality of lecturers (QL).

The comparative regression analysis results in Table 3 show that in both models (model of N = 150 public university lecturers and model of N = 150 non-public university lecturers), there is a correlation between the factors "Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' professional qualifications and teaching capacity" (QC), "Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' scientific research capacity" (RC) and " The quality of lecturers" (QL), specifically:

- In the regression model N = 150 public university lecturers (regression model 1), R^2 = .668 ($R^2 > 0$) confirms the scales "Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' professional qualifications and teaching capacity" (QC) and "Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' scientific research capacity" (RC) explain 66.8% of the variation in the scale "The quality of lecturers" (QL). VIF = 1.713 ($1 < VIF < 2$) shows that regression model 1 does not have multicollinearity; Durbin-Watson = 2.022 ($1 < d < 3$), confirms the scales "Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' professional qualifications and teaching capacity" (QC) and "Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' scientific research capacity" (RC) are independent and both have impacts on the scale of " The quality of lecturers" (QL).

Survey regression model N = 150 public university lecturers - Regression model 1 is generalized: QL = 0.801 + 0.378*QC + 0.473*RC.

- In the regression model N = 150 non-public university lecturers (regression model 2), R^2 = .675 ($R^2 > 0$) confirms the scales "Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' professional qualifications and teaching capacity" (QC) and "Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' scientific research capacity" (RC) explain 67.5% of the variation in the scale "The quality of lecturers" (QL). VIF = 1.704 ($1 < VIF < 2$) shows that regression model 2 does not have multicollinearity; Durbin-Watson = 2.105 ($1 < d < 3$) confirms the scales "Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' professional qualifications and teaching capacity" (QC) and "Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' scientific research capacity" (RC) are independent and both have impacts on the scale of " The quality of lecturers" (QL).

Survey regression model N = 150 non-public university lecturers - regression model 2 is generalized: QL = 0.815 + 0.339*QC + 0.458*RC.

5. Conclusion

In the two regression models above, regression coefficients have positive values and the regression coefficient's values shows the degree of correlation between the independent variables and the

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dependent variable in ascending order: "Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' professional qualifications and teaching capacity" (QC) and "Creating motivation to develop university lecturers' scientific research capacity" (RC); Hypotheses H1 and H2 are accepted. The research conclusion can be drawn that incentive/ motivational policies to develop professional qualifications and teaching capacity for university lecturers have not been effective. In more details, the statistical results from the survey data (Table 2) show that: lecturers receive little encouragement/policy support for professional practice (in teaching, research) in reputable educational institutions, universities, and research units to develop teaching capacity and scientific research capacity for universities' development; lecturers receive little recognition, rewards and professional development policies after completing professional advancement programs for a doctorate.

The findings suggest effective university administration policies to develop professional capacity and improve the quality of university lecturers in Vietnam, which are: (1) Develop lecturers with advanced professional qualifications and practical capacity through bringing them opportunities to take part in training courses in educational facilities and practices, cooperative training and research programs; (2) Recognize lecturers' academic and research achievements, reward and transparently implement professional development policies (studying, research, appointment opportunities) to develop high – quality human resources for universities' long-term development goals.

For further explanation, this study emphasizes the strategic goal of universities, of which lecturers becomes the key factor, directly creating training products to enhance training quality and reputation of universities. Therefore, implementing incentive/ motivation policies to improve lecturers' professional qualifications and teaching capacity is aimed to build qualified training human resources serving for the development requirements of universities in the context of integration, competition and human resource training required by social needs as well as labor market.

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