

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR FACULTY MEMBERS AT UNIVERSITIES IN THE MEKONG DELTA REGION PHASE 2021-2025

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Abstract: *This study aims to develop a strategy for developing faculty members at universities in the Mekong Delta region. In two rounds, this study used the expert interview method, with 70 experts from selected regional universities, to evaluate the internal and external factors. The results from the SWOT matrix produced seven strategies that need to be implemented, including attracting, retaining, and developing high-quality faculty members; training and developing faculty members; maximizing the capacity and expertise of faculty members to open new training fields; innovating in recruitment and rational use of faculty members; enhancing the arrangement of faculty members to improve the effectiveness of university education; improving the quality of training and recruitment to improve income sources for faculty members; attracting outstanding students to become faculty members.*

Keywords: *Strategy, Development, Faculty Members, Mekong Delta, Universities.*

I. Introduction

In recent years, the higher education system in Vietnam has been expanding to meet the goals of socialization and education reform and the increasing demand for education and the country's development. Despite the development opportunities, universities need help to survive and grow. The foremost necessary issue at universities is the quality and quantity of faculty members. Faculty members are crucial in determining universities' reputation, brand, and output quality.

The Mekong Delta region currently has many public and private universities to meet the comprehensive development needs of society, offering a variety of majors. However, the current quality of faculty members at these universities still needs to be well-invested in training and attentive care. As society develops, the demand for high-quality human resources increases and faculty members is the most influential factor. Therefore, creating faculty members in terms of quantity and quality is necessary for the coming time for universities in the Mekong Delta region.

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II. Theoretical basis and research methods

2.1. Theoretical Basis

The perspective on human resource development strategy is currently approached in various ways. The most straightforward approach is the viewpoint of Mile and Snow (1984), who consider human resource strategy as “a human resource system to meet the needs of business strategy”. On the other hand, according to Write and MacmaHan (1992), the characteristics of personnel-related actions aim to create conditions for businesses to achieve their business goals.

According to Armstrong and Baron (2002), human resource strategy is “the key to improving business”. Human resource strategy helps organizations see the direction and management methods to use the right person for the right job at the right time to create flexibility in responding to changes in the market.

According to the perspective of Tran Xuan Cau and Mai Quoc Chanh (2012), human resource development is the process of developing physical and mental abilities, perception, knowledge and vocational skills, social characteristics, the creativity of individuals, culture, tradition or a social development approach, human resource development is the process of increasing the quantity and improving the quality of human resources, creating a more rational structure of human resources. From an individual development perspective, human resource development makes individuals grow, have social capacity (physical, mental, and emotional), and have high social characteristics.

Boxall and Purcell (2011) and Wright and McMahan (1992) argue that building and implementing human resource strategy within organizations is crucial.

2.2. Overview of research

In recent years, the issue of developing human resources in Vietnam has attracted considerable attention from managers, and scientists, especially researchers, institutes, and universities. Many researchers have been interested in and researched human resources development from various perspectives. In the context of the economy undergoing transition and focusing on developing human resources at a macro level, human resource development has been associated with serving the economic development strategy or addressing employment and social welfare. Many scientific research projects have been published, proposing solutions for human resource development and the effective use of human resources suitable for economic and social development strategies. Brown and Gallo (2018) emphasize the importance of investing in faculty development to enhance the quality of education. The authors also propose several methods for developing a faculty team, including providing training courses, creating opportunities for faculty members to learn from and share experiences with one another, and regularly evaluating the effectiveness of faculty development programs. Kim et al. (2019) focus on analyzing faculty development programs at universities in Korea. The results show that these programs have varying effects for each

group of faculty members and that faculty development programs need to be customized to meet the needs of each group. Nguyen and Nguyen (2020) focus on researching faculty training programs at universities in Vietnam. The results indicate that these programs need to be improved to meet the needs of faculty members and students while also providing recommendations to enhance the quality of the training programs. Li and Li (2021) focus on researching the factors influencing faculty development. The results show that factors such as teaching ability, scientific research, and management skills all affect faculty development and that universities must provide opportunities for faculty members to develop these skills. In Vietnam, according to Do Minh Cuong and Nguyen Thi Doan (2001), the development of human resources in Vietnamese universities has been mentioned in studies, while feasible solutions have been proposed to develop human resources in universities, including the high-level human resources section in our country to serve the industrialization and modernization cause. Besides, Nguyen Bach Thang (2015) has researched the development of teaching staff at An Giang University based on a personnel management approach. Based on theoretical and practical research on developing faculty members, the author proposes solutions for developing faculty members that are consistent with the university's development strategy.

2.3. Data collection method

Data were collected by conducting a preliminary survey of factors influencing

the development of vocational education and training (VET) in Can Tho city, based on the experience and understanding of 10 experts with practical experience in the field. Can Tho city be chosen because it has the highest number of universities in the Mekong Delta region. The collected results were compiled into a pre-designed questionnaire for further investigation and formal interviews with 70 managerial staff and lecturers from 8 universities in the Mekong Delta region, including Can Tho University, Can Tho University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Can Tho University of Technology, Tien Giang University, Dong Thap University, An Giang University, Bac Lieu University, and Vinh Long University of Technology Education. Based on this, the average scores were calculated to derive the scores for the EFE and IFE matrices to evaluate the internal and external environmental factors affecting the operations of universities in the Mekong Delta region concerning VET development.

2.4. Analysis method

This article mainly uses a qualitative research method, with information to be collected pre-designed in the survey questionnaire. Data was collected through interviews and consulting with experts, with the internal and external factors evaluated using a scoring system ranging from 1 to 4. The author compiled the scores into the IFE, EFE, and SWOT matrices. The results will serve as a basis for developing strategies to develop faculty members at universities in the Mekong Delta region.

III. Results of the study

3.1. Internal factor evaluation matrix – IFE

Based on the reports from the surveyed universities, the situation of DNHE was analyzed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each

university. At the same time, experts' opinions were consulted regarding the factors considered strengths and weaknesses, and the experts evaluated the results. Table 1 below summarizes the results of the selected and assessed strengths and weaknesses factors by the experts.

Table 1: Evaluation of internal environmental factors

Internal environmental factors	Importance level	Classification	Importance score
Strengths			
Most young teachers adapt well to their work	0.15	3	0.45
Teachers' positions are suitable for their expertise	0.14	3	0.42
Schools have good relationships with the local community	0.15	3	0.45
Training and development policies are well met	0.13	3	0.39
Facilities meet the needs well	0.13	3	0.39
Weaknesses			
Salary, bonus, and welfare policies do not meet the needs	0.07	1	0.07
Sense of responsibility in performing tasks is not high	0.05	1	0.05
The human resource development strategy is incomplete	0.07	2	0.14
Recruitment of unprofessional staff	0.05	1	0.05
Job-hopping psychology of teachers is still common	0.06	1	0.06
Total	1.00		2.47

Source Processing survey data from 70 experts at universities, 2022.

The total score of the matrix of internal factors for the faculty team of universities in the Mekong Delta region is 2.47 (lower than the average level of 2.5), indicating that the current internal factors related to the faculty team could be better. Therefore, universities in the Mekong Delta region must make more effort to leverage their strengths and limit their weaknesses to develop their faculty team effectively.

3.2. External Factor Evaluation (EFE) Matrix

Through the analysis of external environmental factors that affect the

development process of the faculty team and the synthesis reports of universities on opportunities and challenges during their operations, combined with expert assessments of the faculty team at universities in the Mekong Delta region, this study conducted interviews with experts to evaluate these factors and determine their different levels of importance. The following is a summary of the evaluation of external environmental factors of universities in the Mekong Delta region selected and evaluated by experts, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Evaluation of External Environmental Factors

External Environmental Factors	Importance Level	Classification	Importance Score
Opportunities			
The Fourth Industrial Revolution has a strong connectivity	0.14	4	0.56
The source of intellectual human resources in society is increasing	0.09	2	0.18
The state pays much attention to the education sector	0.12	3	0.36
The legal system is increasingly perfect	0.10	3	0.30
The process of international integration is developing strongly	0.09	3	0.27
Challenges			
The level of competition among schools in the region is increasing	0.09	3	0.27
The national education development level is still slow	0.11	3	0.33
The economic environment has a strong impact on the level of attachment	0.08	1	0.08
The training program has not caught up with the practical world	0.08	2	0.16
The quality of input resources does not meet the requirements	0.10	2	0.20
Total	1.00		2.71

Source: Processing survey data from 70 experts at universities, 2022.

The total score of the external factors matrix is 2.71 (higher than the average level of 2.5). It indicates that the response of universities in the Mekong Delta region to external environmental factors is quite good. However, they should be active and improve further to seize the best opportunities and mitigate the risks from the external environment.

To develop faculty members of universities in the Mekong Delta region, after synthesizing the factors affecting their operations from the environment, a combined matrix (SWOT) was used to propose some strategies to enhance the quality and quantity of teaching staff in these universities soon.

Table 3: SWOT Matrix - Combination Matrix

SWOT	Strengths (S): S1: Most teachers are young and adaptable to the job. S2: The position of teachers is suitable for their expertise. S3: Schools have good relationships with the local area. S4: Training and development policies are well met. S5: Equipment serves well to meet needs.	Weaknesses (W): W1: Salary, bonus and welfare policies do not meet needs. W2: Sense of responsibility in carrying out tasks is not high. W3: Human resource development strategy is not complete. W4: Recruitment work lacks professionalism. W5: Teacher turnover is still common.
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<p>Opportunities (O)</p> <p>O1: The fourth industrial revolution is strongly connected.</p> <p>O2: Increasing knowledge workforce in society.</p> <p>O3: State focuses more on the education sector.</p> <p>O4: Legal system is increasingly improved.</p> <p>O5: International integration process is developing strongly.</p>	<p>SO Strategy:</p> <p>. S1, S2, S3, S4, S5 + O1, O2, O4, O5: Attract, retain and retain a high-quality teaching staff.</p> <p>. S1, S2, S3, S4 + O1, O3, O5: Train and develop a teaching staff.</p>	<p>WO Strategy:</p> <p>. W1, W2, W3, W5 +O1, O2, O3, O4: Improve the quality of training and enrollment to improve income for teachers.</p> <p>. W1, W2, W4, W5 + O1, O2, O3, O4, O5: Innovate the selection and reasonable use of teaching staff.</p>
<p>Challenges (T):</p> <p>T1: Level of competition among universities in the region is increasing.</p> <p>T2: National education development level is still slow.</p> <p>T3: Economic environment strongly affects the level of attachment.</p> <p>T4: Training programs have not kept up with global practice.</p> <p>T5: Quality of input resources does not meet requirements.</p>	<p>ST Strategy:</p> <p>. S1, S2, S4, S5 + T1, T2, T4: Maximize the capacity and expertise of faculty members to open new training programs.</p> <p>. S1, S3, S4, S5 + T2, T3, T5: Attract talented students with excellent academic achievements.</p>	<p>WT Strategy:</p> <p>. W1, W2, W3, W4, W5 + T1, T2, T3: Strengthen the arrangement of faculty members to improve the effectiveness of university education.</p>

Source: Compiled by the author in 2022.

3.3. Summary of strategies

Table 4 below presents a synthesis of strategies developed from the SWOT matrix contributing to the development of NGV at universities in the Mekong Delta region during the 2021-2025 period.

Table 4: Summary of Strategies

No.	Strategies
1	Attract, retain and develop high-quality faculty members.
2	Train and develop the faculty team.
3	Maximize the potential and expertise of the faculty to open new fields of study.
4	Innovate the selection and appropriate use of faculty members.
5	Enhance faculty team arrangement for improving the effectiveness of higher education.
6	Improve the quality of education and enrollment to increase income for faculty members.
7	Attract talented individuals from outstanding students

Source: Compiled from SWOT matrix, 2022.

The research results indicate seven strategies developed to enhance faculty members of universities in the Mekong Delta region from 2021 to 2025. The study

has similarities to the research of Do Minh Cuong and Nguyen Thi Doan (2001); Nguyen Bach Thang (2015) regarding the development of faculty members to serve

the needs of Non-Native Learners in the region. Additionally, the research shows that faculty members' development in terms of quantity and quality should be rearranged to meet current needs, which is similar to the study of Tran Xuan Cau and Mai Quoc Chanh (2012).

3.4. Recommendations for some strategic solutions for the development of faculty members

Solution for attracting high-quality human resources

Universities in the Mekong Delta region should continue implementing policies to attract talented individuals and technology experts from outside the institution to actively apply advanced, modern approaches and new technologies in management, teaching, and administration.

Solutions for training and developing human resources

Taking advantage of financial resources, department budgets, and national target programs to regularly train, update, and supplement expertise, new teaching methods, and advanced teaching experience to improve professional qualifications and expertise for lecturers.

They are developing a long-term plan to train postgraduate staff and lecturers, providing opportunities for lecturers to participate in local, government and foreign universities' Master's and PhD training programs.

Solutions for the work environment to retain human resources

Building an excellent organizational culture creates a unique identity for the

institution, focusing on investing in people and developing loyal, dedicated, enthusiastic teaching staff to carry out the institution's mission.

Solutions for policies and regulations to attract and retain talented employees

We ensure good material benefits for teaching staff, such as salaries, allowances, promotions, teaching hour policies, and timely rewards for outstanding lecturers.

IV. Conclusion

Developing faculty members is a crucial factor that needs to be focused on in building higher education institutions in the Mekong Delta region to improve the effectiveness and quality of human resource training for future generations, meet the socio-economic development needs of the region, and contribute to the development of the country. This research is based on the opinions of 70 experts from 8 universities in the Mekong Delta region, including Can Tho University, Can Tho University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Can Tho University of Technology, Tien Giang University, Dong Thap University, etc. Through evaluating and scoring to draw elementary scores for the IFE and EFE matrices, and then synthesizing them into the SWOT matrix, the research team derived solutions to develop the faculty team for universities in the Mekong Delta region within the context of regional connectivity and development: Attracting, retaining, and rewarding high-quality faculty members; Training and developing the faculty team; Maximizing the capacity and qualifications of the faculty team to open new training programs; Innovating

in the selection and reasonable use of the faculty team; Enhancing the arrangement of the faculty team to improve the effectiveness of higher education; Improving the quality of teaching and enrollment to increase income for faculty members; Attracting talent from students with excellent academic achievements.

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