IDENTIFYING THE TRAINING NEEDS OF THE HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS AT A NEWLY ESTABLISHED UNIVERSITY IN VIETNAM

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BA (English Pedagogy)

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Submitted in (partial) fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in the Graduate School of Education at The University of Melbourne

2009
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DECLARATION

This thesis does not contain material which has been accepted for any other degree in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by any other person, except where due reference is given in the text.

Signature: ..................................................

Huong Thi Lan Nguyen
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HODs</td>
<td>Head of Departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HaUI</td>
<td>Hanoi University of Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-level academic managers/leaders</td>
<td>Deans/HODs/Chairs/School Directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competencies</td>
<td>relevant skills &amp; knowledge that are delivered to a set standard in a specific context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capabilities</td>
<td>ability to figure out when and when not to deploy these competencies, and a capacity to refine, update and develop them</td>
</tr>
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</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Australian Government for their extraordinary initiative in establishing the Australian Leadership Awards program. Without such an initiative, I would not have had the opportunity to undertake my Masters study at the University of Melbourne or to produce this thesis.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Vincent Lynn Meek. He has kindly encouraged and supported me during the whole journey of the thesis. Without his helpful guidance on research methods and his critical comments on my writings, this thesis would have never been completed.

I am grateful to the group of lecturers who delivered the subject ‘Research Methods in Education’ in semester 1, 2008. In particularly, I would like to thank Dr Julianne Moss and Mr Bradley Shrimpton whose critical comments on my research proposals were very valuable to this research project.

I am pleased to thank the Library Team at the University of Melbourne, particularly Ms Appy Laspagis from the ERC. Their research tutorials and guides, especially with respect to developing searching skills and using Endnote software have helped me accelerate my thesis progress.

This is a great opportunity to thank many of my colleagues at Hanoi University of Industry in Vietnam. Without the Rector’s permission, this research would not have been possible. I am also indebted to all of the participants: 5 members of the Board of Rectors, the Human Resource Manager, the Training Administration Manager, 8 Heads of Departments, and 9 Deputy Heads of Departments. They all spent their precious time to take part in my interviews and shared with me their most critical thoughts.

I owe my deep gratitude to my parents in law, Tham and Ngo, who have looked after my little son very well during my study in Australia. Although my husband, Thang, is not physically with me, he has been the greatest source of support to me mentally. My deep gratefulness also goes to my parents, Khoa and Bien, my sisters, Thuy, Lan, Ly, and my lovely brother, Manh. They all have provided me with the best possible support and inspiration.

This thesis is dedicated to my 6 year old son, Thai, who had to stay away from his mother for 1.5 years during her overseas study.
ABSTRACT

There has been an absence of research into professional development of academic middle-level managers in higher education generally, and in developing countries and Vietnam particularly. This research aims at identifying the training needs of the Head of Departments (hereby referred to as HODs) at a newly established university in Vietnam in order to close this gap. The research methods adopted in this research are integrative research reviews, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews. The findings from this research suggest that the training needs of the HODs are totally based on the HODs’ specific roles, the set of qualities desired of them from stakeholders, and their current knowledge and practice. While the HODs in developed countries mainly want to improve their cognitive capabilities, the HODs in the case study have the strongest training needs in generic and role specific competencies. The main conclusion drawn from this study is the HODs’ performance is influenced significantly by not only their competencies and capabilities but also by their organizational contexts. This thesis recommends that to enhance the HODs’ performance, apart from providing them with training, appropriate organizational and human resources policies must be developed and implemented. By doing so, the university would be able to maintain a good fit between the university’s development needs and the HODs’ hierarchy of needs, such as career development, thereby significantly enhancing the HODs’ performance.
1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Over the last decades, higher education has undergone rapid and dramatic changes, much of which has been fuelled by massification. From an elite system, which serves less than 15% of the university relevant age group, a number of higher education systems have now transformed into a mass system enrolling between 15% and 40%. Some systems have even become a universal system enrolling more than 40% (Trow, 1973, cited in Furlong & Phillips, 2001). The Japanese higher education system, for example, has accommodated as much as 49% of the eighteen year old cohort (Arimoto, 2002).

Similar to other public service sectors, higher education has been suffering from state budget cuts and also from being increasingly held accountable to the public. The operation of higher education institutions are no longer based solely on social needs but also on economic efficiency, as a consequence of the ever more limited resources. To meet the diverse needs emerging from the changing contexts of the economy and society, universities are expected to play integrative roles of value-adding, learner-centeredness, high quality, equity, responsiveness, diversity, innovation, flexibility, cost effectiveness, public accountability, and social responsibility (Lee, 2008).

In these changing scenarios, higher education systems throughout the world have to react responsively, especially in reforming governance and management in order to survive and develop. Regarding governance, countries worldwide have been restructuring their higher education governance to optimize the performance of this sector. More countries are moving from the central control of ministry of education model to the supervisory model (Fielden, 2008; V. L. Meek, Goedegebuure, & Boer, 2009 forthcoming). In the OECD countries, universities have been attaining higher and higher levels of autonomy and governments have been withdrawing from direct management (Higashi-Hiroshima, 2007).
In Portugal, for example, The Autonomy Law for Universities and Polytechnics was passed in 1988, by which higher education institutions were given freedom to establish their own regulations together with scientific, pedagogical, administrative and financial autonomy (Carvalho & Santiago, 2007). Similar innovations can be observed in the Netherlands and Australia (V. L. Meek et al., 2009 forthcoming), Belgium (Verhoeven, 2009 forthcoming), Italy (Boffo, 2009 forthcoming), and Canada (Boyko & Jones, 2009 forthcoming). In Asia where higher education is considered to be less developed than in other parts of the world, countries such as China, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan have undertaken significant higher education reforms. In Japan, for instance, national universities were incorporated in 2004 and became more autonomous in their management (Higashi-Hiroshima, 2007). Generally, universities worldwide have become more independent academically and financially.

With respect to management, there has been a steady trend to push the university sector towards a corporate model (Shattock, 2006; Vieira da Motta & Bolan, 2008). In fact, ‘whether we call it ‘managerialism (soft or hard)’, ‘new managerialism’ or ‘New Public Management (NPM)’, the management narrative in both rhetoric and practice has penetrated higher education systems and institutions nearly everywhere’ (L. Meek, et al., 2009 forthcoming, p. 1). With the influence of the free market, higher education institutions are now embracing a number of management practices from the business sector, for instance, privatisation, downsizing and outsourcing, budget diversification, benchmarking, performance assessment, quality assurance, and so on. Universities have also developed their own mission statements, strategic plans, and carry out massive marketing activities to maximize institutional performance. Tertiary institutions have also expanded considerably the management responsibilities of deans of faculty, heads of schools/departments and other equivalent middle-level academic management positions. Academic units in many universities are now responsible for their own day to day management of both finance and human resources.
Middle-level academic managers are probably the group affected most by the changing governance and management model. They are those in charge of the basic academic units: departments/schools, faculties, and in some cases, research centres/institutes. They perform around 80% of the administrative decisions in colleges and universities (M. Wolverton, Gmelch, Wolverton, & Sarros, 1999a). In the past, they were considered as senior teachers who also happened to engage in administrative processes (Kallenberg, 2007). However, they are now increasingly expected to be ‘able to define missions, objectives and strategies; have the capacity to manage financial and human resources and to assume strong management leadership, in contrast to traditional academic styles of negotiation and consensus building’ (L. Meek, Goedegebuure, Carvalho, & Santiago, 2009 forthcoming, p. 1). Present academic managers are now increasingly facing serious and genuine challenges. As the time of less professional administration is over, deans and heads of departments (hereby referred to as HODs) must become professional academic managers who can bring about the changes needed for sustained performance (Vieira da Motta & Bolan, 2008).

1.2. Problem statement

The literature shows that very limited professional development has been provided for academic leaders, although this issue has been recommended by most studies (McLaughlin, Montgomery, & Malpass, 1975; Sarros, Gmelch, & Tanewski, 1997; Smith & Stewart, 1999; Spangler, 1999; M. Wolverton, Gmelch, Wolverton, & Sarros, 1999b; M. Wolverton, Wolverton, & Gmelch, 1999). Only 3% of over 2000 academic leaders surveyed in American national studies from 1990 to 2000 had leadership development programs at their universities (Gmelch, 2004a). Stanley & Algert (2007) also found that HODs generally have no professional development training to develop their conflict intervention strategies. Generally, formal training or instruction for academic leaders rarely exists (Aziz et al., 2005; Gillett-Karam, 1999; Glee, 2007; Smith & Stewart, 1999; Spangler, 1999; Mimi Wolverton, Ackerman, & Holt, 2005).
Chapter 1: Introduction

The effects of a lack of training often jeopardize the development of more effective academic leaders. Wolverton et al. (2005) argue that under-preparedness for academic leaders matters because not all people possess both sets of academic and administrative skills to become good leaders. Insufficiently prepared academic leaders may ‘run the risk of jeopardizing departmental and institutional effectiveness’ (Mimi Wolverton, Ackerman, & Holt, 2005, p. 228). Yelder & Codling (2004) also states that the absence of support or training is likely to cause poor leadership and dysfunction. Arguing that universities usually invest in faculty professional development and neglect that of HODs, Stanley & Algert (2007) strongly recommend universities support training and development for these heads. As a result of their findings, Glee (2007) urges further research to be done to establish and provide continuing education programs for academic leaders.

It is crucial to find out the training needs of middle-level academic managers to provide education and support, given the central position occupied by middle-level academic managers, the necessity of professional development for them in the changing contexts of higher education, and also the little formal training so far accessible. In developing countries like Vietnam where higher education has lagged far behind that in other developed countries, little has been known about the position of middle-level academic managers. There is an absence of research into developing countries generally and Vietnam’s higher education management and leadership training needs specifically. Research into the training needs of middle-level academic managers in Vietnamese universities is particularly urgent. It becomes even more pressing for newly established universities who need to develop almost everything from the start.

By focusing on identifying the training needs of HODs at a newly established university in Vietnam, this research is intended to partially close this gap. Hopefully, the research findings will provide the basis for developing professional development programs for these heads and thereby their performances can be enhanced significantly.
1.3. **Research questions**

The overall aim of this research is to advance the understanding of the training needs of the HODs at newly established university in Vietnam. To shed light on the problem, the following research questions are addressed:

1) *What are the roles of the HODs at a newly established university in Vietnam?*

2) *What are the desired qualities of the HODs at a newly established university in Vietnam?*

3) *What are the gaps between the current and the desired qualities of the HODs (the training needs) at a newly established university in Vietnam?*

4) *Why do the HODs’ performance gaps exist?*

5) *How can the HODs’ performance be enhanced?*

1.4. **Research approach**

The overarching research methodology is a qualitative case study. The key research methods used are integrative research reviews, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews. The integrative research literature reviews helped to develop a theoretical framework for the study and to analyse the subject matter. Document analysis was used to develop general understanding of the HODs at the selected university and to back up and supplement evidence from other sources. Interviewing was the main method of the investigation. Semi-structural interviews were conducted with not only the HODs, but also deputy HODs, the university top managers, and other key informants such as human resource and administration training managers. The multiple data sources help to make the research results more reliable.

An analysis was based on the major topics that shaped the research questions. The specific analytic methods used are cross-case synthesis and pattern matching (Yin, 2009). Findings from each individual case were not reported separately but were aggregated across individual cases. In this process, the empirically based themes were matched with the predicted ones in the literature. In other words, the empirical findings are compared and contrasted against the findings in the literature review and the various management theories contained in the literature.
1.5. **Assumptions**

The research was conducted in light of the following assumptions:

- HODs assume important roles at university (Montez, Wolverton, & Gmelch, 2003; M. Wolverton, Gmelch, Wolverton, & Sarros, 1999b)

- There are certain desired qualities of HODs (Aziz et al., 2005; Bryman, 2007; Scott, Coates, & Anderson, 2008; Trocchia & Andrus, 2003).

- Some performance gaps may exist between HODs’ desired and current knowledge and practice (Rossett, 1987).

- HODs have training and education needs (Aziz et al., 2005; Scott et al., 2008; Mimi Wolverton et al., 2005).

- Professional development for HODs can help improve their performance and facilitate university development (Mimi Wolverton et al., 2005).

1.6. **The researcher**

Before taking this course (Master of Education – Educational Management), the student researcher had been working in the educational sector in Vietnam for nearly 10 years. She was a teacher of English, the Head of International Cooperation Training English Department, and most importantly the HOD of the Foreign Language Faculty at Hanoi University of Industry (hereby referred to as HaUI). Thus, the researcher brings to the inquiry practical experience as a HOD with both knowledge and understanding of the context of the university under investigation.

The researcher acknowledges that the same experiences that are so valuable in providing insights could serve as a liability, biasing her judgment regarding the research design and the interpretations of the findings. Therefore, she is committed to maintaining rigor and trustworthiness in the analysis of the results. Apart from using multiple data sources and multiple methods, she constantly used peer debriefing with her supervisor. In addition, she employed members check, audit trail, and descriptive data and verbatim quotes as means of strengthening the objectivity and credibility of the research.
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.7. Research Significance

This research work adds great value to current research in a number of significant ways. Firstly, the research provides a critical review of the position of middle-level academic managers (their roles and duties, challenges, professional development opportunities, and desired qualities). Secondly, the importance of research in this field of professional development becomes even more apparent when other researchers have mourned the lack of research in this area. The issue is noted as ‘one of the most glaring shortcomings’ in educational management and leadership research (Conger and Benjamin 2001, cited in Gmelch 2004). Thirdly, the empirical findings can contribute significantly to developing systematic training programs for higher education’s HODs. The research outcome can also be used as a source of reference for university leaders in Vietnam in the management and leadership of educational administrators’ professional development. Lastly, the study provides international readers with insights into the position, and particularly the training needs of HODs in a non-western context.

1.8. Limitations of the study

Although this research has achieved its overall aim of understanding the training needs of the HODs in a newly established university in Vietnam, there are still limitations to this research work. Firstly, it is a case study of only one institution and the results cannot be applied to the whole of Vietnamese higher education, much less to that of all developing countries. Also, the time spent in the field and the number of interviews that could be completed was substantially restricted by the very limited resources available to the researcher. However, one should bear in mind that this research was intended to appeal to relatability and so, the results should not be misrepresented. It is expected that as more researchers study the issues faced in this work, and implement more in-depth case studies, an understanding of the issues addressed in this work will increase incrementally, adding to the rich tapestry of research on training needs of middle-level academic managers.
1.9. **Outline structure**

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides the readers with background information on the changing contexts of higher education, how they have impacted university governance, how the roles of middle-level academic managers have been changed, and specifically the need to provide professional development for middle-level academic managers so that they can manage these challenges. The focus of this research is discussed and justified and the research questions are stated. The chapter also briefs the readers on the research approach, research assumptions, the researcher, research significance, research limitations, and the outline structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Background of the study

Two major areas in the literature are critically reviewed in this chapter: the position of middle-level academic managers in higher education and background to the Vietnamese higher education system. In reviewing the middle-level academic management position, the chapter identifies roles, desired qualities, challenges, professional development opportunities, and specifically training needs of middle-level academic management. In reviewing the higher education in Vietnam, the chapter presents the development, achievements, and obstacles of the Vietnamese higher education contexts. From the two areas of literature review, emerging issues are raised and the rationale for empirical research is presented.

Chapter 3: Research design

This chapter discusses and justifies the overall research methodology (a qualitative case study) and data collection techniques (research reviews, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews) adopted in the study. Details on the site and sample are provided together with the analytical approach to the empirical data. In addition, the limitations of the adopted approach and ways to maintain rigour and trustworthiness are discussed.
Chapter 4: Findings and Discussions

Findings from the case study are reported in this chapter. The results of the interviews are discussed based on the issues raised by the research questions: the roles of the HODs, their desired qualities, the gaps between their current and desired qualities, the reasons for the gaps, and how to narrow the gaps. In each theme, the empirical findings from the three groups of informants are compared not only against one another; they are also compared and contrasted against the findings in the literature review. Thus, this chapter describes, discusses, analyses and synthesises the empirical findings and the findings from the literature review.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This chapter revisits the overall aim and specific research questions of this research study. The findings are summarized and related to the specific research question topics: the roles of the HODs, the desired qualities, the gaps between the current and desired qualities, the reasons for the gaps, and the ways to enhance the HODs’ performance. Conclusions from this research work are derived and linked to each research question, and based on these conclusions, recommendations are made.
2. CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

2.1. Introduction

The purpose of this case study was to identify the training needs of eight university academic HODs at a newly established higher education institution in Vietnam. Specifically, the researcher sought to understand the gaps between the HODs’ current and desired qualities. To carry out this study, it was necessary to complete a critical review of current literature. This review was ongoing throughout the data collection, data analysis, and synthesis phases of the study. Two major areas of literature were critically reviewed: the position of middle-level academic managers generally in higher education and that on Vietnamese higher education. Firstly, a description of the middle-level academic management position is provided. This part reviews roles, desired qualities, challenges, professional development opportunities, and specifically training needs of middle-level academic management. Secondly, a review of the literature on Vietnamese higher education provides an understanding of the development, achievements, and obstacles of the system in which the HODs are working. From the two literature reviews, emerging issues are raised and the rationale for empirical research is presented.

2.2. A literature review of middle-level academic managers in higher education

Academic middle-level management positions in higher education as a research subject has attracted a number of scholars in the last 30 years. Three major themes have been investigated. A group of researchers, for instance, McLaughlin, Montgomery, & Malpass (1975), Moses (1985), M. Wolverton, Gmelch, Wolverton, & Sarros (1999a), Wolverton, M., Ackerman, & Holt (2005) have examined roles, duties and responsibilities of deans and HODs. Others have focused on challenges, role ambiguity or role conflict for these academic leaders (Gmelch, Wolverton, Wolverton, & Sarros, 1999; V. L. Meek et al., 2009 forthcoming; Stanley & Algert, 2007; M. Wolverton et al., 1999b). However, very little literature has explored the professional development for academic HODs (Aziz et al., 2005; Mimi Wolverton et al., 2005), especially of those in developing countries’ contexts.
2.2.1. Roles of middle-level academic managers

The literature suggests that HODs have been assuming a wide range of duties depending not only on the expectations of individual HODs but also on the nature of the institution and the size of the department. In one of the earliest large scale research projects on HOD tasks, McLaughlin, Mongomery and Malpass (1975), found three major roles that HODs in the United State play: academic, administrative and leadership. In a comparative study examining HOD duties in the United States and Australia, Wolverton, Gmelch Wolverton, Sarros (1999a) found six common major themes: administrative tasks, resource management, scholarship, leadership, faculty development and resource development. In reviewing the literature on the subject, Wonverton, Ackerman and Holt (2005, p. 28) comment that: ‘Overtime, researchers have compiled laundry lists of tasks which fall under the purview of the HODs. These range from 26 tasks collapsed into 4 categories (Caroll and Gmelch, 1994) to 54 (Tucker, 1992) to a staggering 97 (Crewswell, Wheeler, Seagren, Egley and Beyer, 1990)’. Evidently, there is no single, universal list of academic HOD duties.

Although their responsibilities vary in detail and the roles demanded are governed in large measure by departmental context, a critical review of the literature found six generic groups of duties of middle-level academic managers. These broad categories of tasks are department governance, program management, human resource management, budget and resources, external communication, and office management. The following section discusses these six categories.

Department governance

The first major area of responsibilities of HODs is department governance. Similar to leaders in the business sector, HODs are required to create long term goals and plans for the department (W. Gmelch & V. Miskin, 1993; Leaming, 2006; McLaughlin et al., 1975; Montez et al., 2003; Tucker, 1993; M. Wolverton et al., 1999a), communicate the set goals to department members (Montez et al., 2003), and implement the shared goals (Tucker, 1993). Working in a highly academic context, consensus building appears to be essential. A great majority of studies stress preparing and conducting department meetings as an important task for HODs.
(Leaming, 2006; McLaughlin et al., 1975; Montez et al., 2003; Tucker, 1993; M. Wolverton et al., 1999a). In addition, a HOD also serves as an advocate for the department (Montez et al., 2003; Tucker, 1993) but more importantly, encourages faculty members to communicate ideas for improving the department (McLaughlin et al., 1975; Montez et al., 2003; Tucker, 1993) and cooperates with them to establish department policies (Leaming, 2006).

**Program management**

The second significant field of HODs’ responsibilities is program management. As teaching and learning is a central business of academic departments, a number of studies found that HODs must be in charge of developing and upgrading department curriculum, courses, and programs (W. Gmelch & V. Miskin, 1993; McLaughlin et al., 1975; Tucker, 1993; M. Wolverton et al., 1999a) and schedule classes (Leaming, 2006; Tucker, 1993). Some HODs are also responsible for monitoring dissertations, prospectuses, and programs of studies for graduate students (McLaughlin et al., 1975; Tucker, 1993), supervising off-campus programs, and supervising, scheduling, monitoring, and grading department examinations (Tucker, 1993).

**Human resource management**

- Administrative staff and student management

Human resource management is another considerable task for middle-level academic managers. They manage not only teaching staff but also administrative staff and students. Related to non-teaching staff, HODs’ major role is to supervise and evaluate their work (Leaming, 2006; McLaughlin et al., 1975; Montez et al., 2003; M. Wolverton et al., 1999a). Concerning student affairs, McLaughlin et al. (1975) and Tucker (1993) seem to describe more concrete duties of HODs such as recruiting and selecting students and advising and counselling students. However, more recent authors such as Leaming (2006) appear to use a customer-centred approach to student management. In this respect, HODs are required to ensure that proper curricular and career advice is available to all students majoring and/or taking courses in the department and respond to student grievances and grade appeals.
Chapter 2: Background of the study

- Teaching staff management

With respect to faculty affairs, a HOD has to do a wide range of duties that managers in other contexts commonly do such as recruiting and selecting faculty members, assigning faculty responsibilities, evaluating faculty performance, and initiating promotion and tenure recommendations (W. Gmelch & V. Miskin, 1993; Leaming, 2006; McLaughlin et al., 1975; Montez et al., 2003; Tucker, 1993; M. Wolverton et al., 1999a). In addition, in an educational context, maintaining morale, and reducing, resolving, and preventing conflict among faculty members are crucial tasks for HODs (Leaming, 2006; McLaughlin et al., 1975; Montez et al., 2003; Tucker, 1993; M. Wolverton et al., 1999a). In their leadership role related to faculty issues, HODs are also expected to provide informal faculty leadership (Leaming, 2006; McLaughlin et al., 1975; M. Wolverton et al., 1999a) and enforce faculty responsibilities, counsel and guide faculty (Leaming, 2006). As a mediator, HODs must also keep faculty members informed of department, college, and institutional plans, activities, and expectations (Leaming, 2006; McLaughlin et al., 1975; Montez et al., 2003; Tucker, 1993; M. Wolverton et al., 1999a).

- Professional development

In managing academic staff, middle-level academic managers need to facilitate professional development activities both for themselves and for faculty members. For their personal scholarship, HODs or deans have to maintain their own scholarship program and associated professional activities, provide professional leadership and serve as a good example in the department, remain current with own academic discipline, and obtain resources for personal research (Leaming, 2006; Montez et al., 2003; M. Wolverton et al., 1999a). Apart from that, they need to foster the development of each faculty member’s special talents and interests, foster good teaching in the department, stimulate faculty research and publications, and encourage faculty members to participate in regional and national professional meetings (W. Gmelch & V. D. Miskin, 1993; Leaming, 2006; McLaughlin et al., 1975; Montez et al., 2003; Tucker, 1993). Middle-level academic managers are also expected to represent the department at meetings of learned and professional societies (Leaming, 2006; McLaughlin et al., 1975; Montez et al., 2003; Tucker, 1993).
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Budget and resources management

Budget and resources management are other major responsibilities of middle-level academic managers. As higher education has been experiencing severe budget cuts from governments, this group of managers are expected to be skilled in financial management. They are required to administrator the department budget, prepare and propose department budgets, and prepare annual reports (W. Gmelch & V. D. Miskin, 1993; Leaming, 2006; McLaughlin et al., 1975; Montez et al., 2003; Tucker, 1993; M. Wolverton et al., 1999a). They also need not only to seek outside funding (Leaming, 2006; Tucker, 1993; M. Wolverton et al., 1999a) but also to encourage faculty members to submit proposals for contracts and grants to government agencies and private foundations (Tucker, 1993).

External communication

Middle-level academic managers also have to maintain a variety of external communication networks in their job. They need to communicate department needs and interact with upper level administrators and coordinate activities with outside groups (McLaughlin et al., 1975; Tucker, 1993). They are also in charge of such activities as initiating and maintaining liaison with external agencies and institutions (Leaming, 2006; Montez et al., 2003; Tucker, 1993). In some institutions, they have to process department correspondence and requests for information (Tucker, 1993) and foster alumni relations (Montez et al., 2003).

Office management

The final task area of middle-level academic managers is office management. They are mainly responsible for managing department facilities and equipment, and maintaining essential department records, including student records. In addition, they must also keep current with technological changes and comply with government and certification agency guidelines (Montez et al., 2003).
A summary of the roles of middle-level academic managers

In short, middle-level academic managers take on multiple roles in their job. The tasks they perform may differ considerably from contexts to contexts. However, commonalities do exist. They all have to deal with various constituents and complete a wide range of duties. The environment they work in is highly academic. The major object they manage is human beings. Therefore, to successfully fulfil their tasks, they should not only have all the skills required of all managers but also have well-developed people skills.

Critically, the roles of middle-level academic managers in this review are rather western biased due to a lack of studies on middle-level academic management in other parts of the world. Locations of research in the review are strictly confined to some developed countries such as America, Australia and England. Additionally, although extensive lists of duties are found, some researchers have argued that there is little agreement on which dimensions of the position training programs should be developed (Aziz et al., 2005). This vital gap in research needs to be filled urgently so that middle-level academic management can be more effective.

2.2.2. Qualities of effective middle-level academic managers

Apart from identifying roles, duties, and responsibilities of HODs, studies also explore the qualities of successful middle-level academic managers. Bryman’s (2007, p. 693) literature review on this topic finds that ‘very little systematic research has been carried out on the question of which types of leadership are associated with departmental effectiveness’. This section reviews several studies of different scales with varied methods on this topic. It appears that different studies have found various sets of qualities identified as ‘ideal’ for effective middle-level academic managers.
1.2.2.1. A review of studies on effective leadership qualities of middle-level academic managers

**Characteristics and Abilities of an Effective Marketing HOD at American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business**

In examining characteristics and abilities crucial for the effectiveness of departmental heads of marketing at 167 American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business universities, Trocchia & Andrus (2003) reviewed the literature and found that:

‘Effective heads possess the traits of openness, integrity, honesty, and objectivity, and are both task and people oriented (Leaming 1998; Roach 1976). Outstanding chairpersons at three universities were found to be unselfish; fair; respectful; collegial; flexible; compassionate; cooperative; and, not surprisingly, trustworthy (Mitchell 1987). Leadership ability, communication skills, and organizational ability were also found to be important when fulfilling the requirements of the role (Jennerich 1981; Staton-Spicer and Spicer 1987) (Trocchia & Andrus, 2003, p. 7).

In their own study, Trocchia & Andrus (2003) used an Internet survey of 247 full-time marketing faculty members and 43 marketing HODs. Apart from leadership, managerial, and scholarly abilities, which were congruent with the education literature, they identified a different marketing HOD role that has not been emphasized in the education literature - that of ‘the diplomat’. These qualities are useful for developing training programs for marketing HODs or can be used for interviewing, recruiting, and reappointing individuals for the position.

**Six Critical Issues for Middle-level Leadership in Postsecondary Settings by The Academy for Leadership Training and Development (USA)**

Filan & Segren (2003) describe the six components of skills and competencies associated with leadership effectiveness in higher education middle-level management used in a leadership training model for middle-level academic managers provided by the Academy for Leadership Training and Development, an internationally recognized program in the United States. The components are:
understanding self, understanding transformational leadership, establishing and maintaining relationships, leading teams, leading strategic planning and change, and connecting through community. These components form a framework for understanding the knowledge and skill competencies necessary for higher education middle-level managers. However, all these knowledge and skill competencies were based on anecdotal evidence rather than on original research. Empirical studies should be carried out to confirm the credibility of the framework.

An American case study of knowledge, skills, and abilities required for success of chairs/directors

In identifying the training needs of HODs at a rural 4-year public state tertiary institution in the United States, Aziz et al. (2005) examined the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) perceived by deans, associate deans, HODs, and school directors as required for success of chairs/directors. Top 20 KSAs rated most important for success of chairs/directors are displayed in Table 1:

Table 1: KSAs required for success of chairs/directors (adapted from Aziz et al., 2005, p. 581)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task areas</th>
<th>KSAs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional development within department/program</strong></td>
<td>Ability to maintain faculty morale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ability to promote high quality teaching in the department or program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ability to promote faculty research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ability to foster the development of individual faculty members’ talents and interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional development of chair/director</strong></td>
<td>Leadership skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ability to manage multiple roles as chair or director (e.g. teaching, administration, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interpersonal skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skill in decision-making under ambiguous circumstances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External communication</strong></td>
<td>Ability to communicate effectively with the dean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ability to promote the department or program’s image and reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ability to communicate department or program needs to upper level administrators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Chapter 2: Background of the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Intradepartmental communication</em></th>
<th>Ability to convey performance criteria and the evaluative process to faculty and staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Faculty issues</em></td>
<td>Knowledge of faculty recruitment policies and procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge of faculty selection policies and procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skill in reducing, resolving, and preventing conflict among faculty members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ability to evaluate teaching within the department or program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ability to deal with and provide feedback for unsatisfactory faculty performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Legal issues</em></td>
<td>Knowledge of procedures pertaining to the promotion and tenure of faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Budgeting and resources</em></td>
<td>Knowledge of internal and external sources of funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Student issues</em></td>
<td>Ability to plan, evaluate, and update department or program curriculum and programs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The KSAs scale items seem to be very specific to each task area of the HODs. However, since these KSAs are based on the specific tasks performed by the HODs at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, what these items really mean seems to be ambiguous. For example, it is very difficult to understand what a chair should do in order to ‘promote high quality teaching in the department’. Therefore, the use of these lists of top KSAs for success of chairs and directors appears to be very limited.

*A literature review of main leadership behaviours associated with leadership effectiveness at departmental level in the USA, Australia, and the UK*

By critically reviewing articles in refereed journals for the period 1985–2005, Bryman (2007) found the 13 most common aspects of leader behaviour associated with effectiveness at departmental level in three countries: the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Specific qualities are presented in the table below:
Table 2: Main leadership behaviours associated with leadership effectiveness at departmental level (adapted from Bryman, 2007, p. 697)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Leadership behaviours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Clear sense of direction/strategic vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Preparing department arrangements to facilitate the direction set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Being considerate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Treating academic staff fairly and with integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Being trustworthy and having personal integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Allowing the opportunity to participate in key decisions/encouraging open communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Communicating well about the direction the department is going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Acting as a role model/having credibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Creating a positive/collegial work atmosphere in the department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Advancing the department’s cause with respect to constituencies internal and external to the university and being proactive in doing so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Providing feedback on performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Providing resources for and adjusting workloads to stimulate scholarship and research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Making academic appointments that enhance department’s reputation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bryman (2007) has contributed significantly to the literature of the effective leadership behaviours of university middle-level academic managers. For the first time since the beginning of the new millennium, a thorough review of effective leadership activities for academic managers at departmental level is presented. The list of 13 effective leadership behaviours is one of the newest researches in today’s higher education. These leadership qualities can be used by departmental leaders as leadership standards to be obtained. In addition, based on these attributes, leadership training programs can be developed to help middle-level academic managers do a better job.

Bryman’s (2007) study, however, also has certain limitations. These leadership behaviours are seen as effective only in the contexts and time periods of the studies being reviewed, specifically, in the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom from 1985 to 2005. They cannot be applied comprehensively to all other circumstances. In this context, the skill sets required of middle-level academic managers in other parts of the world need to be studied. In an attempt to fill the gap, the present study investigates the desired qualities of academic HODs at a newly established university in a developing country. Bryman’s (2007) list of effective leadership behaviours are used as a source of reference for comparison and contrast.
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An Australian academic leadership capability framework by Scott et al. (2008)

In a large-scale 2 year study, Scott et al. (2008) developed a conceptual framework for leadership capability in higher education. The study undertook an extensive international literature review, an online survey with more than 500 experienced Learning and Teaching leaders in 20 Australian universities, and a series of national and international sector feedback workshops with 500 leaders on the results, along with an additional 100 leaders at the international review workshop. The conceptual framework is presented in the following figure (extracted from Scott et.al., 2008, p 18):

The framework shows five dimensions necessary for effective performance as an academic leader. Personal capabilities include three interlocked components: self-regulation, decisiveness, and commitment. Interpersonal capabilities are made up of two subscales: influencing and empathising. Cognitive capabilities comprise three interconnected subscales: diagnosis, strategy, and reflexibility and responsiveness. Generic competencies consist of knowledge and skills that focus on university operations and self-organization. Role-specific competencies cover knowledge and skills related specifically to teaching and learning.

Scott et al. (2008) emphasize that all five dimensions are strongly related in forming capability for academic leader. The ownership of the generic and role specific skills and knowledge is compulsory but it is not adequate for effective performance as a leader. To achieve effectiveness, a leader also needs to acquire all the three interrelated
capabilities identified in the top three circles of the figure. An effective leader must know how to use all five components in an integrated and productive way over time. A weakness in one area will affect the operation of the others.

The study identified the top 12 ranking leadership capabilities that count for effective academic leadership in Australian higher education. The results indicate that aspects of personal, interpersonal, and cognitive capabilities are perceived by the respondents to be critical to effective performance across all positions, including middle-level managers (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Top 12 ranking leadership capabilities adapted from Scott et al. (2008) (the rank of each item is given in brackets, 1 is the highest)**

| Personal capabilities                          | - Being true to one’s personal values & ethics (2) |
|                                               | - Remaining calm under pressure or when things take an unexpected turn (3) |
|                                               | - Understanding my personal strengths & limitations (5) |
|                                               | - Energy & passion for L&T (7) |
|                                               | - Admitting to & learning from my errors (10) |
| Interpersonal capabilities                    | - Being transparent & honest in dealings with others (1) |
|                                               | - Empathizing and working productively with staff and other key players from a wide range of backgrounds (4) |
| Cognitive capabilities                         | - Identifying from a mass of information the core issue or opportunity in any situation (8) |
|                                               | - Making sense of and learning from experience (9) |
|                                               | - Thinking creatively & laterally (11) |
|                                               | - Diagnosing the underlying causes of a problem & taking appropriate action to address it (12) |
| Skills & knowledge                            | - Being able to organize my work & manage time effectively (6) |

**1.2.2.2. A critical comment**

Scott et al. (2008) is one of the largest which presents systematically a general framework for leadership capability in higher education. The capability profiles can be used as a set of criteria to identify and select university leaders, monitor their performance, and develop their capabilities. The distinction between competency and
capability in the framework is very worthwhile (Scott et al., 2008, p. 12). Competencies were seen as ‘identifying what has to be known or performed, in what context and to what standard’. Capabilities involve ‘that level of talent, gift or capacity required to produce productive outcomes and deliver innovations under testing, uncertain and constantly shifting human and technical situations’. These two notions are generic and seem to cover all different elements in the desired qualities presented by various authors. Therefore, it appears to be the most comprehensive theoretical framework.

By using Scott et al.’s (2008) framework to classify the desired qualities in the studies reviewed into competencies and capabilities, the qualities that are evaluated as being most important for effective performance appear to be ‘capabilities-centred’. For example, all the six critical issues for middle-level leadership in postsecondary settings by The Academy for Leadership Training and Development in Filan & Segren (2003) are related to ‘capabilities’. Ten out of twelve main leadership behaviours associated with leadership effectiveness at departmental level presented by Bryan’s (2007) fit in ‘capabilities’ category. However, since the numbers of studies are very small, further research needs to be done to confirm this proposition.

The literature review hardly found any studies on these issues in developing countries. Since different universities have different missions, functions, and priorities, the skills needed to be a successful HOD may vary from one context to another, the best qualities for effective middle-level academic management in the literature review may not be true in developing contexts. In the present study, the desired leadership qualities of HODs at a newly established university in a developing country are profiled. Scott et al.’s (2008) academic leadership capability framework is used as a scaffold for data analysis. The findings will be benchmarked against the capabilities that count for effective academic leadership in the developed contexts.
2.2.3. Challenges of middle-level academic managers

The natural challenges of middle-level academic management

The position of middle-level academic manager appears to be a very challenging one (Gmelch, 2004a, p. 70; Gmelch et al., 1999; V. L. Meek et al., 2009 forthcoming; Stanley & Algert, 2007; M. Wolverton et al., 1999b), particularly taking into account the multiple role and the short term nature of the position. Middle-level managers seem to experience difficulties in every role. In a mail survey to 1370 deans from 360 institutions in the United States to examine roles and challenges of deans, Montez et al. (2003) found that most of the future challenges identified by deans are similar to the role dimensions they are taking. The challenges are in budget and resources, curriculum and program development, governance, faculty management, technology, personal balance, and ensuring diversity of faculty and student population. In addition, it is also proved that to become an expert, it normally takes a HOD eight years (Thomas & Schuh, 2004). Unfortunately, in education settings, a HOD usually serves in the position for about six years on average. Consequently, the job appears to be very challenging.

Role conflict management

Dealing with role conflict is one main source of stress for deans and chairs. As a special type of organization, academic departments are ‘coalitions of diverse individual and interest groups’ (Bolman & Deal, 2003) possibly including teachers, students, parents, employers, alumni, university councils, other departments, and any other internal and external constituencies. There are enduring differences among coalition members in values, beliefs, information, interests, and perceptions of reality.

Gmelch (2004a, p. 75) complains that ‘caught between conflicting interests of faculty and administration, trying to look into two directions, academic leaders often do not know which way to turn’. For instance, while students want to pay low tuition fee, teachers may want high salaries, small classes, and the university probably wants larger classes, higher revenues, and less expenditures. A number of authors such as Gmelch and Miskin, 1995, Hickson and Stack, 1992, Seagren and others, 1994, and Lucas, 1994, cited in Gillett-Karam, 1999 all agree that leading from the middle is no easy task.
Balancing between administration and scholarship

Another big challenge in middle-level academic management is trying to maintain a balancing act between administration and scholarship and between professional and personal life. The academic versus administrator role paradox is a common theme among HODs. Because most HODs spend a long period of time (almost 18 years on average) as academics prior to being heads, they typically want to be productive scholars (Carroll 1990, cited in M. Wolverton et al., 1999). HODs strive to retain their academic identity as most return to faculty status (80 percent) after serving as HOD (Gmelch, 2004b). However, commitment to a leadership role reduces their publication productivity significantly. 80% testified that the lack of balance caused them moderate to severe stress (Gmelch, 2004a). Not only do HODs and deans suffer from having to balance within their profession, they also endure the stress of reaching equilibrium between their personal and professional life. A significant percentage of HODs express dissatisfaction with having less time with their family (89%), friends (87.5%) and leisure (79.5%) (Gmelch, 2004a).

Dealing with the new context of academic leadership

As stated, the fact that a number of external forces have impacted higher education increases the level of stress for academic leaders. Increase student enrollment and changing demographics, diminishing fiscal resources, and increasing external demand for accountability and quality (Gmelch et al., 1999; V. L. Meek et al., 2009 forthcoming; Stanley & Algert, 2007; M. Wolverton et al., 1999b) all require superior leadership to keep universities sustainable. In the changing contexts of governance and management in higher education mentioned in chapter 1, deans and HODs now have to change completely from being merely scholarly administrators to academic entrepreneurial leaders. They must be professional academic managers who possess a wide range of expert managerial skills. Since the job is never a ‘rose garden’ (Gillett-Karam, 1999), whoever takes this challenging role should be prepared and supported to do a good job.
Generally, researchers seem to agree that the position of middle-level management is challenging. They are ‘public servant leaders every moment of their day’ (Gmelch, 2004a, p. 70) who have to serve and satisfy various interest groups, for example higher level leaders, faculty, students, and parents. They seem to be trapped between maintaining their scholarly productivity while holding down their management position. In spite of a wide agreement on deans’ and HODs’ problems with balancing competing demands, very few studies have shown how HODs or deans can be prepared and supported to perform a better ‘balancing act’. Also, very few studies examine conflict management styles or strategies that help them manage conflict (Stanley & Algert, 2007).

### 2.2.4. Professional development of middle-level academic managers

**Academic Leader Professional Development Needs**

A further issue is that HODs and deans need professional development. The literature reveals that professional development for academic leaders has been recommended by most studies (McLaughlin et al., 1975; Sarros et al., 1997; Smith & Stewart, 1999; M. Wolverton et al., 1999b; M. Wolverton et al., 1999). As early as 30 years ago, McLaughlin et al. (1975) suggested that HODs should be helped to learn more about non-academic activities required for the job. Sarros, Gmelch, & Tanewski (1997) also recommend a comprehensive and systematic training and support program for current and future HODs. To help HODs deal with stress, Wolverton et al. (1999b) advocate professional training for chairs. To help deans cope with role ambiguity and role conflict, M. Wolverton, Wolverton, and Gmelch (1999) suggest early preparation through training. Trocia & Andrus (2003) also argue that institutions should organize training mechanisms such as workshops and seminars for HODs. Gmetch et al. (1999) recommend 3 dimensions from which training program for deans can be offered: pre, present and post deanship. There appears to be a fair degree of consensus for the professional development for academic leaders.
**Academic Leader Professional Development Opportunities**

The literature shows that very limited professional development has been provided for academic leaders (Aziz et al., 2005). Researchers in the field generally agree that there is little robust research on how people learn leadership in universities (Bensimon, 1989, cited in Scott, et al. 2008, Conger and Benjamin 2001, cited in Gmelch 2004). Little practical guidance has been provided on how to develop and implement leadership training programs in educational contexts (Huntley-Moore and Panter, 2003, cited in Scott, et al. 2008). Particularly, the programs identified inadequately addressed academic leadership needs (Yielder & Codling, 2004).

A review of literature from leading journals (for instance, Studies in Higher Education and Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management) found only two case studies on professional development programs for HODs by Mimi Wolverton et al. (2005) and Aziz et al. (2005). Mimi Wolverton et al. (2005) examine the first step taken at the University of Nevada Las Vagas (U.S.A) to address middle-level academic leadership preparedness issue. Aziz et al. (2005) present a systemic design and implementation of training needs assessment of HODs and school directors at Bowling Green University in Northwest Ohio (U.S.A).

Recently, in some developed countries, attempts have been made to support both novice and in-service higher education middle-level managers. In the United States, there is help available for mastering the position of HOD. The variety of resources range from national programs to discipline associations, regional consortia, and institution-specific programs. At the national level, The American Council on Education, for example, has been offering a series of general national workshops for HODs and deans for some 40 years. The programs aim to develop the leadership capacities of newly appointed department, division, and program heads and renew the skills and enthusiasm of experienced heads. At institutional level, a number of universities also offer Campus-based Chair Leadership Development Programs such as Iowa State University, Florida State University, and The Ohio State University. As an example of institution-specific programs, National Institute for Leadership Development provides leadership programs in community colleges based on a philosophy of inclusivity and diversity for women and men.
In England, The Leadership Foundation for Higher Education was founded in 2004 by the UK government to provide support and advice on leadership, governance and management for all UK University and higher education colleges. The foundation offers a five-day development program for HODs. The program provides a framework which explores the practice of leadership, puts forward methods to approach challenging staffing issues and considers how change can be implemented, managed and achieved. The program primarily aims at new or potential HODs.

In Australia, the federal government funded LH Martin Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Management was set up in 2007 to meet the urgent need in Australia and the region for high quality leadership and management education in higher education and vocational education and training institutions. As a part of its executive education program, the Institute has also started offering HOD program in 2008. It is a 7 day intensive, residential leadership and management development program tailored to meet the needs of new and established academic and administrative HODs in Australian and New Zealand tertiary education. The program is principally designed for academic and administrative line managers in Australian and New Zealand tertiary education.

These education and training programs clearly show the growing attention to management and leadership skills development for middle-level academic managers in higher education. This training initiative is a necessary response to the need of higher education management and leadership. Regrettably, it is more available in developed countries than in developing countries. It is particularly hard to find similar development programs in other parts of the world, specifically in Vietnam. In addition, although training courses are provided to middle-level managers in these western countries, surprisingly, so few empirical studies have formally presented how these training programs have been developed, conducted, and assessed.

Training needs of middle-level academic managers

As stated, Aziz et al. (2005) and Wolverton et al. (2005) are the only two studies that report the formal assessment of the training needs of academic HODs in higher education in the United States. By conducting needs assessment with deans, sitting
HODs, and prospective academic leaders and consulting findings from a number of other research reports on leadership preparation, Wolverton et al. (2005) found three generic groups of training needs for HODs: conceptual understanding, skill development, and reflective practice.

Conceptual understanding generally indicates the needs of HODs to understand the job duties of a HOD and the specific context of the university that they will work in as a HOD. Skill development refers to the desire of HODs to possess a skill set that helps them work successfully in the position, for example in dealing with students, staff, and upper level administrators. Reflective practice refers to the needs to learn from past experiences, i.e. to analyze the actions done in the past, reflect on them, draw lessons for the future, and thereby strengthen their skills in leadership.

By using survey questionnaire, Aziz et al. (2005) asked deans, associate deans, HODs, and school directors at a rural 4 year public state institution in the United States for their opinions about the most critical knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) for HODs’ success and the necessity of providing training for HODs in these areas. The top ten rated training needs are displayed in Table 4.

**Table 4: Top 10 rated training needs KSAs for chairs/directors (adapted from Aziz et al. 2005)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>KSAs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ability to acquire external funding for the department or program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Knowledge of policies and procedures for obtaining external funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Knowledge of internal and external sources of funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ability to read and interpret budget reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ability to deal with and provide feedback for unsatisfactory faculty performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Skill in reducing, resolving, and preventing conflict among faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Knowledge of procedures for dealing with sexual harassment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Skill in adopting different leadership styles to fit varying situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Skill in decision-making under ambiguous circumstances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Skill in preparing and managing department or program budgets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These two case studies can be considered as the very first attempt in formal presentation of training programs for HODs. However, again, they are both confined to the context of American universities. Since institutional contexts vary greatly, the training needs found in the studies are true for HODs of those particular universities in particular time periods. They cannot be used to design training programs for HODs in other contexts. In this context, empirical research should be done, especially in non-western contexts to find out how middle-level academic leaders should be best supported so that they can systematically learn the skills and abilities that could lead to success. This current study assesses training needs of HODs at a newly established university in Vietnam. The training needs found by Aziz et al. (2005) and Wolverton et al. (2005) are used to compared to the findings of the current research.

A framework for professional development of academic leaders

In identifying the conceptual framework for academic leadership capability in Australian higher education, Scott et al. (2008) do not explicitly identify the training needs of Australian academic leaders. However, they present a framework for academic leaders to follow their professional learning. They suggest that professional learning should be an action learning cycle which involves an ongoing process of identifying the gaps between one’s present capabilities and the leadership capability elements developed by the study. Academic leaders can fill these gaps by combining self-managed leaning with practice-based learning, and formal leadership development. In this gap-filling process, effective indicators (like those identified in the study) should be used to measure their results and the new gaps for development are re-addressed.

Scott et al. (2008) is the only study to date that present comprehensively a framework for professional development of academic managers. The present study uses a similar approach to address the training needs of HODs. It identifies the gaps between the HODs’ current management knowledge and practice with their desired ones. The study also identify the forms of support that they think may be of most assistance in filling their gaps. Throughout the analysis and discussions of the study, Scott et al. (2008) is used frequently as a source of reference for comparing and contrast.
2.3. The context of higher education in Vietnam

2.3.1. A brief history of Vietnamese higher education development

Vietnam has a long tradition of higher education which has undergone various stages of development along with the historical and political contexts of the country.

The Feudal Period (from 938 to 1847)

During this time, higher education system in Vietnam was similar to that of China, as a consequence of over a thousand years of being dominated by Chinese imperial regimes. The main responsibility of higher education in this period was to train bureaucracies (Welch, 2007). Special examinations were organized to select a limited number of the talented people to work in state governance. It was during this period that the oldest known university in South East Asia, the Royal University was founded in 1076 (Albatch & Umakoshi, 2004).

The Period of French Colonial Rule (from 1847 to 1945)

In this period, Vietnamese education generally, higher education particularly remained backward, due to the French colonial regime’s policy of keeping the Vietnamese ignorant so that they were easily controlled. The sole aim of training was to maintain colonial rule. Therefore, higher education was highly elitist. With pressure from some radical Vietnamese scholars, the French established the first college: the Ecole de Plein Exercise de Medicine et de Pharmacie de l’Indochine in 1902 (D.H. Nguyen, 1948, cited in Altbach & Umakoshi, 2004). After 1917, a number of colleges were established, such as Teacher Training College (1917), The College of Law and Administration (1918), The College of Agriculture and Forestry (1918), The College of Civil Engineering (1918), and The College of Fine Arts and Architecture (1924). In addition, some technical schools were established, such as the School of Practical Industry (presently HaUI) and the school of Fine Arts.
Chapter 2: Background of the study

The 1945 – 1954 Period

This period was marked by the August Revolution of 1945 which gave National Independence to Vietnam. The newly formed government put strong emphasis on improving the education system, especially proposed a campaign against illiteracy. However, after a short time, the French returned and colonialism continued until 1954. Since Vietnam was divided into two areas, the French controlled area and the Viet Minh controlled area, two education systems existed. In French controlled area, university students studied in French with both Vietnamese and French lecturers. In the Viet Minh area, both language and lecturers were Vietnamese. These different education systems made it difficult for the country to have a uniform education system.

The 1954-1975 Period

As a consequence of the 1954 Dien Bien Phu victory which separated Vietnam into two parts: the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the north and the Republic of Vietnam in the south, from 1954 to 1975, there existed two different types of higher education institutions: the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe model and the US model in the two regions respectively. In the north, there were thirty higher education institutions in the school year 1974-1975, serving 56,000 students (Albatch & Umakoshi, 2004). In keeping with the Soviet model of higher education, the majority were mono-disciplinary institutions. Most of the lecturers were trained in the USSR.

In the south, there were 18 higher education institutions in this period, serving a total of 87,608 students in the school year 1972-1973 (Green, 1973, p 13, cited in Altbach & Umakoshi, 2004). Following the American university model, these institutions were multi-disciplinary universities. A number of teaching staff were trained in the US. Under American influences, higher education in the South was less elite, responded better to economic needs, adopted more modern teaching pedagogy, and started to introduce a credit system of academic attainment (Albatch & Umakoshi, 2004).
In short, before 1975, higher education in Vietnam was influenced strongly by the colonial powers, as a consequence of continuous invasions. Almost no Vietnamese university was truly indigenous in origin. Vietnamese universities were mostly imposed by various foreign rulers. As each colonial power had its own academic model and influenced the Vietnamese higher education system in different ways depending on their political purposes, higher education in Vietnam developed unsystematically. The colonial university was typically strictly controlled by the government and did not have full autonomy and academic freedom (Albatch & Umakoshi, 2004), creating problems for contemporary Vietnamese universities. From 1975 to 1986, due to the political contexts, higher education in Vietnam was profoundly impacted by the Soviet Union model.

The 1975 – 1986 Period

After the reunification of the north and the south in 1975, the education system in general, and higher education in particular was rebuilt under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Training (hereby referred to as MOET). As stated, Vietnam’s higher education was powerfully influenced by the Soviet system. The majority of the Vietnamese higher education institutions were still mono-disciplinary. Most of the overseas trained lecturers undertook their studies in the Eastern block countries. Curricular materials were mainly taken from the Soviet Union and the Eastern Europe. The foreign language taught at universities was either Russian or Chinese. The limited access to other parts of the world certainly prevented the development of diversity in Vietnamese higher education.

Higher education institutions in Vietnam have traditionally been under the direct control of MOET and its specialized department. Matters subject to national regulation include admission criteria, examination requirements, core curriculum subjects, and the granting and recognition of degrees and other academic awards. This model of governance has been proved to be unsustainable in the long term.
Chapter 2: Background of the study

The Post 1986 Period

It was only after 1986 that the Vietnamese government independently developed the higher education system for the country, as a result of the government’s economic innovation ‘doi moi’ policy and the collapse of the socialist system of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The government considered education and training as the first national priority policy in 1991. Following this strategy, a number of legal documentations have been issued to lay out provisions for the system. Decree No. 90/CP, dated November 24, 1993 presented the structure of national education. The Education Law of December 2, 1998 and the Education Law of June 27, 2005 provide general guidelines for the educational system generally and higher education particularly.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the government has paid greater attention to developing the higher education sector. In its ‘Socio-Economic Development Plan 2006-2010’, both quantitative and qualitative goals for higher education were set. Enrollments into universities and colleges are expected to increase by 10.3% yearly, to reach a level of 200 students per 10,000 population by 2010. Vietnamese universities are expected to reach international standards. In addition, the Government of Vietnam has recently approved the Higher Education Reform Agenda - a blueprint for substantial and comprehensive reform of the system by 2020. The agenda develops a forward-looking strategy for the development of higher education and research. These actions clearly show the strong commitment of the government of Vietnam to improving the higher education system in a rapidly changing economic and social context.

2.3.2. Recent developments of higher education in Vietnam

Opening up of access

Following the Higher Education Reform Agenda, a number of changes have been taken place. For example, the number of higher education institutions in Vietnam has been increased dramatically. From 2005 – 2008, 48 new universities were established and 86 new colleges evolved from vocational training schools. The total number of
universities and college doubled, from 153 in 1998 to 369 in 2008 (Hieu, 2008). The government is also planning to build four new universities of international standards (Hanh, 2009). As estimated by MOET, to meet the demands of human resources for the national economics development and the needs of the people, there should be a total number of 386 higher education institutions in 2010, 410 in 2015, and 600 in 2020, of which 225 should be universities and 375 colleges (Hieu, 2008). To improve the higher education system, special attention must be paid to newly established universities and colleges since they will account for a large part of the whole system.

_Policy developments_

In terms of governance, universities are starting to obtain a certain level of autonomy over financing, training, human resources, and international cooperation (IIE, 2004). In terms of quality assurance, universities have been required to conduct self-evaluation and be externally accredited since 2004. To build up a sufficient contingent of tertiary education lectures, MOET has just proposed its ‘Doctoral training project for lecturers at colleges and universities in 2008-2020’ with a total budget of about 700 million USD. Higher education law has been drafted and expected to be proposed to the National Assembly by the end of 2010. In short, there are good signs of improvements in higher education sector in Vietnam.

**2.3.3. The challenges of higher education in Vietnam**

_A wide range of burning issues_

Without doubt, there will be continuing difficulties in developing Vietnam higher education. In a brief review of higher education difficulties in Vietnam, Hayden & Thiep (2007) note that in spite of a surge in the number of enrolments – from 162,000 in 1992/93 to well over 1.3 million in 2005/06, higher education institutions can only offer places for only 10% of the relevant age group. There are very limited opportunities for young people from rural areas and poor backgrounds to attend higher education. The staff-student ratio (about 1:30) is too high. Teaching methods continue to be old-fashioned. There is a low level of professional commitment due to
low academic salaries. Most academics are not involved in research. Universities still have limited control over financial matters, staffing issues, student selection, and curriculum choice and student academic qualification. There is a lack of depth in leadership experience and skills within institutions. Ngoc (2007) claims that failing to globalize the Vietnamese higher education is synonymous with the country’s being left behind in all aspects.

Low ranks in global benchmarks

The Global Competitiveness Report (WEF, 2008) shows that Vietnam 2008-2009 Global Competitiveness Index ranked 70 out of 134 economies, of which higher education and training scores only 3.4/7, ranks 98/134; the quality of the educational system places 120/134. The report also reveals that inadequately educated work force is the third most problematic factor for doing business. In addition, no Vietnamese university has been named in any of the rankings of universities conducted by popular international institutions such as Shanghai Jiao Tong University; US News and World Report; Times Higher Education Supplement (THES); Maclean University Ranking; and The Guardian University guide. In order to improve the system so that universities can fulfil their missions and higher education in Vietnam can catch up with other systems of the world, both immediate and long term appropriate measures must be taken at various levels of the system.

Immediate future challenges

It seems that all facets of the systems need to be improved. They range from infrastructure, legal frameworks, curriculum, financial management, accreditation and quality control, and human resource management. In the context of rapid expansion in the number of colleges and universities as stated, the challenges of masification are considerable. Similar to challenges of most other Asian universities, the most important functions are funding the expansion, providing necessary physical facilities, and still improving quality, upgrading research, enhancing the salaries, and working conditions of the teaching staff, among others (Albatch & Umakoshi, 2004). Tough measures should be taken to overcome these difficulties.
It is argued that no plans can be implemented without human resources. Similarly, the above challenges can only be solved by the talent and the commitment of multi-level actors in Vietnam. Therefore, the most important task is to develop capabilities in human resources, particularly management and leadership skills of government officials, university administrators, and especially middle-level academic managers. They should really be exceptional leaders with not only first-class educational backgrounds but also excellent managerial skills to improve Vietnamese poorly developed higher education. Only with sound knowledge and skills in educational management and leadership will they understand and support the national reform agenda, and hence, communicate them to their subordinates and translate top university managers’ visions into reality. Nobody but these agents will improve higher education quality and standards. While waiting for decisions to be made by the government, universities should be proactive in preparing and developing their own leaders and managers to succeed.

2.3.4. Studies on higher education management and leadership in Vietnam

Asia generally, and Vietnam in particular is rather weak in terms of research on innovation capacity. It is not surprising to discover that there is almost no empirical study on higher education leadership and management in Vietnam. In a review of the literature on Vietnam higher education generally, and management and leadership specifically, only a few publications were found. The question of how to best prepare for university leaders and managers has hardly been addressed in either English or Vietnamese. Therefore, studies should address this area. To develop a group of higher education academic leaders, it is necessary to find out how university middle-level academic leaders really expect to be supported. With all the ongoing changes in the wider social contexts as well as in higher education, the need becomes more critical for new universities who do not seem to have everything in place. The present study identifies the training needs of academic HODs of a new university to bridge this research gap.
Chapter 2: Background of the study

2.4. **Emerging issues and the need for empirical research**

The review of the literature focuses on middle academic manager position and critical issues in higher education in Vietnam. In the first area of the review, it is found that middle-level academic managers perform six major areas of tasks: office management, department governance, budget and resources management, human resource management, external communication, and program management. There are also certain leadership attributes that are considered effective in middle-level academic management, for example, having a clear sense of direction/strategic vision, being trustworthy and having personal integrity, creating a positive/collegial work atmosphere in the department, and knowing how to provide feedback on performance.

In their positions, middle-level academic managers face a variety of challenges. Apart from the natural difficulties of the job, middle-level academic managers have to deal with enduring differences of diverse groups within and outside the institutions. They also have to maintain a balancing act between administration and scholarship and between professional and personal life. A number of external forces that have impacted higher education also increase the level of stress experienced by these managers.

Regarding professional development for middle-level academic managers, although there appears to be a high degree of agreement on the professional development needs for deans and HODs, opportunities for developing management and leadership skills for them are still limited. Surprisingly, very few empirical studies have formally presented how their training needs should be assessed. The only two studies on identifying the training needs of HODs found that HODs need to have fundamental conceptual understanding of their roles, develop appropriate skills, and learn from practice. The four generic knowledge, skills, and ability areas they need to be trained in are budgets and funding, faculty issues, legal issues, and professional development of chairs.
The literature review on higher education in Vietnam finds that the sector in this country has undergone unsystematic development as a consequence of long years at war. The system has been negatively affected by the Chinese, French, American, and lately the Soviet Union education model. Only after 1986 has the government of Vietnam started to rebuild the system. Although a number of recent developments have been observed, continuing challenges still remain in the massification of the system, quality control and accreditation, infrastructure improvement, finance and human resource management and so on.

In this context, both long term and short term plans must be developed and implemented effectively. It is argued that this innovation needs, first of all, the advanced knowledge and skills of higher education leaders and managers at various levels. At institutional level, universities, especially the new ones, should develop and promote their internal management and leadership. An initial step is probably identifying the training needs of their deans and HODs.

A critical issue in the review of the literature is that training needs of HODs and deans is under-explored, particularly in developing contexts such as Vietnam. Since the professional training of middle-level academic managers is urgent, and authors have mourned the lack of sound research in professional development for deans and HODs, empirical research must be done to fill the gap. The next chapter presents the research design of a case study which identifies the training needs of HODs in a newly established university in Vietnam. The research was done to further expand research on deans and HODs’ training needs in higher education.
3. CHAPTER 3: THE RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1. Introduction

This research study has a number of research questions set within the context of higher education:

1) What are the roles of the HODs at a newly established university in Vietnam?

2) What are the desired qualities of the HODs at a newly established university in Vietnam?

3) What are the gaps between the current and the desired qualities of the HODs (the training needs) at a newly established university in Vietnam?

4) Why do the HODs’ performance gaps exist?

5) How can the HODs’ performance be enhanced?

Chapter 2 identified a gap in existing research, particularly empirical research related to training needs of HODs and deans, especially in developing contexts such as Vietnam. An important contribution of this research will be the study and analysis of empirical data on the roles, desired qualities, and ultimately, training needs of HODs at a newly established university in Vietnam. By comparing theory with practice – i.e. comparing the literature review findings with the ‘real world’ – the researcher will gain a fuller understanding of the training needs of middle-level academic managers, and be better placed to contribute useful knowledge to enhancing middle-level academic managers’ performance.

This section – Research Design – will provide the details of the overarching research methodology selected to address the research issues identified above, together with the precise means for collecting data for analysis including site and sample selection and the analysis approach to be adopted. In addition, the reader will be directed towards the thorny issues of potential limitations and problems with the chosen research strategy and its implementation, and how the researchers have tried to maintain rigors and trustworthiness.
3.2. **The overarching methodology**

This research is primarily a qualitative case study – an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2003, p. 308). The choice originates firstly from the researcher’s perceptions of the nature of reality. Social reality is only knowable through the human mind and socially constructed meaning (Spencer & Spencer, 2004). Knowledge is based on understanding the meaning of the process or experience (Crotty, 1998). Therefore, researchers have to get involved in the social contexts to gain knowledge. The overarching methodology is also based on the nature of the research problem and the questions being asked.

The nature of the research problem is well matched with the ‘particularistic’ feature of case studies. The study addresses a definite group of people (i.e. the HODs) and focuses on a specific issue (i.e. their training needs). It derives at a full description of the training needs of HODs at the particular context of a newly established university in Vietnam. Case study method, which can ‘concentrate attention on the way particular group of people confront specific problems, taking a holistic view of the situation’ (Shaw, 1978, p.2, cited in Merriam (1998), is arguably the most appropriate choice for this research project.

A qualitative approach is selected for training needs assessment in this study. To identify the training needs, the researcher looked for the HODs’ performance gaps between their desired and current knowledge and practice, a method of identifying training needs recommended by Rossett (1987). The researcher also examined the informants’ feelings about the problems, the causes of the HODs’ performance gaps, and the solutions to the problems. In other words, not only the ‘what’ question, but also the ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions were asked. The later types of question, according to Yin (2003, p.6), deal with ‘operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence’. Thus, qualitative work, which can provide a rich and thick description of the phenomenon under study, is needed. In addition, case studies can ‘get as close to the subject of interest as they possibly can … partly by their access to subject factors (thoughts, feelings and desires)’ (Bromley 1986, p.23 cited in Merriam, 1998). Therefore, it is believed that case studies can reveal HODs’ actual needs.
The proposed methodology is in line with those of a number of other researchers such as Aziz et al. (2005) and Wolverton et al. (2005). These two papers report case studies of professional development programs for academic HODs in higher education in the United States. Wolverton et al. (2005) examine the first step taken at the University of Nevada Las Vagas (U.S.A) to address middle-level academic leadership preparedness issue. Aziz et al. (2005) present a systemic design and implementation of training needs assessment of HODs and school directors at Bowling Green University in Northwest Ohio. It is intended that a similar research approach will be used for a Vietnamese context.

3.3. The precise methods

3.3.1. Integrative Literature Reviews

The study used a research reviews method. The purpose of research reviews was to develop a theoretical framework for the study (Yin, 2003) or to analyse the subject matter (Rossett, 1987). Through research reviews, the researcher was able to describe the HOD position, especially the knowledge, skills, and abilities required of the HODs, and their training needs, as covered by previous research. The theoretical framework assisted in data collection and was used as a guide with which to compare the empirical results of the study and to see if any analytic generalization of the results could be made (Yin, 2003).

With respect to the review of the literature, the researcher used different research tools. ‘Supersearch’ was used to search for library catalogues (for published print and non print texts including books, audiovisual material and complete journals) and electronic databases (for individual journal articles). Online search engines such as Google, and Google Scholar were used to search the Internet. The most frequently used databases were University of Melbourne Library Catalogue, ERIC (CSA), A+ Education (Informit), Web of Science (ISI), Education Research Complete (EBSCO), Expanded Academic ASAP (Gale), Educational Research Abstracts (Taylor & Francis), University of Melbourne Digital Repository (DigiTool). The selected descriptors included: HODs/heads, deans, higher education, educational manage*/lead*, professional development, educational human resource management, training needs assessment/identification. The publication period considered was preferably within the last five years (2004-2009).
3.3.2. Document Analysis

The study also used document analysis. This method is said to be stable, unobtrusive, exact, and provide broad coverage (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, it is absolutely essential in most research projects of any type and especially relevant to case study topics (Yin, 2003). In this study, document analysis was used to develop general understanding of the HOD position at the studied university. Rossett (1987, p. 64) advised that ‘extant data is significantly enriching the needs assessment interview process by grounding it in what has occurred at work’. Yin (2003) also recommended document analysis for backing up and supplementing evidence from other sources.

In analysing documents, the research looked at a variety of documents and records, such as the university’s organizational charts; human resource policies regarding staff development, performance assessment, recruitment and selection; HODs’ job descriptions; HODs’ key committees and memberships; size of departments; and records of department performance such as research publications, and number of enrolments.

3.3.3. Semi-structured Interviews

Interviewing was the main method of the data collection. As an inquiry method, interviews allow researchers to enter into the other person’s perspective (Patton, 2002). It is the method of exploring the hearts and minds of concerned parties (Rossett, 1987). Yin (2003) argues that interviews are one of the most essential sources of case study information. In this study, interviews helped the researcher discover the current knowledge base and practice of HODs, the gaps between their current practice and the desired knowledge base. Through interviews, the researcher was able to discern how the participants feel about the gaps in their leadership and managerial skills, their explanations for the gaps, and how they think the problems can be diminished.
To gain the information needed, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews. It means that interviews were carried out based partly on predetermined questions. The interviewees were encouraged to provide extensive and discursive responses within the general framework provided by the interviewer. An interview guide helped the interviewer best use the limited time available for the manager interviewees, who have tightly scheduled work agenda. The pre-conceived questions also helped make interviewing a number of different people more systematic and comprehensive (Patton, 2002).

In order to identify the most accurate training needs of HODs, the researcher gathered data from different sources. Not only the HODs, but also deputy HODs, the university top managers, and any other key informants such as human resource and training administration managers were interviewed. Since the university management board members set directions for the department performance, their opinions on how their subordinates should be developed are vital. Working most closely to HODs, deputy HODs can judge the kinds of knowledge, skills, and abilities their supervisor should have. In addition, human resource managers and training administration managers who provide ongoing support to HODs’ performance also help identify HODs’ training needs. Therefore, the multiple data resources make the research results more valid.

3.4. **Sampling methods**

A purposeful critical case sampling was used for selecting the site of the case. This sampling strategy can be used with the statement ‘if it doesn't happen there it won't happen anywhere’ (Patton, 2002, p.236). This often occurs when resources are limited, so researchers pick a site that would have the greatest information and have the greatest impact on knowledge. On this premise, critical case sampling was possibly the most appropriate choice for a Master minor thesis project due to the limited time and resources.
Site:

Following the purposeful critical sampling, HaUI was selected as a critical case. As one of 28 universities evolved from colleges in Vietnam from 2005 to 2008 (Hieu, 2008), the institution developed from a vocational training school which was established in 1898 to a college in 1999 and to a university in 2005. Despite being a new university, it is one of the biggest universities in Vietnam in terms of the number of students (with a total number of more than 30,000 in 2008) (http://haui.edu.vn). The university was placed number 1 among new universities and number 6 out of a total of 404 colleges and universities in Vietnam who attracts the most number of candidates (36230) registering the university entrance exam in 2008 (http://edu.net.vn/thongke/dhcd.htm). The university’s fast growth rate is a key factor that makes it a critical choice for case study. It was believed that HaUI was an information-rich case to study in depth.

It is argued that in a fast growing university, HODs may be required to have higher standards of knowledge, skills, and abilities to do their jobs than those in more slowly developed institutions. Therefore, the gaps between their current and desired performance may be greater and they therefore are very likely to have stronger needs for training. If HODs at HaUI do not have some types of training needs, then those in other newly established universities may also not have them. It was believed that the case would yield the most information and have greatest impact on the development of knowledge about HODs’ training needs in newly established universities in the Vietnamese higher education context.

Participants:

To select participants, the study used a combination of criterion sampling and a total population strategy (Patton, 2002). With the aim of identifying the training needs of HODs at newly established universities, only those who are Heads of academic departments which offer specialised university level courses were interviewed in the HODss category of informants. Since the number of departments is small (8 departments), all HODs (8 informants) and deputy HODs (9 informants) were included. The study also purposefully selected the human resource manager and training administration manager for interviews (2 informants). All members of the Board of Rectors (5 informants) were also invited to participate.
3.5. Analysis approach

3.5.1. During data collection

As a spiral process of investigation, the distinction between data collection and analysis in qualitative work is vague (Patton, 2002). The analysis and the data collection are entangled and nourish one another (Caulley, 1994). Early analysis enables the researcher to think twice about the initial data which may lead to more appropriate questions and thus, create stronger data (Hurworth, 1996). This form of analysis is essential in doing qualitative work (Caulley, 1994).

In this research, the selected methods required the researcher to start analysing data during collection. In reviewing the literature, the researcher reflected analytically to find out the most common characteristics of HODs and the dimensions of the position around which training may be needed. During collecting the university’s documents and records, data was preliminarily analysed so that the researcher could refine some interviewing questions. After each interview, the researcher briefly analysed the results to decide if some questions needed to be adjusted. Through these early analyses, the researcher was able to be more creative and flexible in obtaining credible data. Data was analysed more formally and systematically when the collection has been completed.

3.5.2. After data collection

3.5.2.1. General strategy

The general analytic strategy was ‘theoretical proposition’ (Yin, 2009). As stated in the introduction of the thesis, the study was carried out in light of several assumptions (see Chapter 1: 1.5. Assumptions). These assumptions served as theoretical orientation which helped to organize the entire case study, from forming the interview questions to analysing the data. The propositions help to focus attention on certain data and to ignore other data. The following themes based on the propositions were used in data analysis: the roles of the HODs, the desired qualities of the HODs, the training needs, the reasons for the HODs’ performance gaps, the ways to enhance the HODs’ performance.
3.5.2.2. **Analytic techniques**

**Cross-case Synthesis**

The study used a cross-case synthesis technique (Yin, 2009). It means that findings from each individual case were not reported separately but were aggregated across individual cases. Each section was devoted to a separate cross-case issue, and the information from the individual cases was dispersed throughout each section. Because the number of cases was small, the syntheses did not incorporate quantitative techniques. The data from the individual cases was transcribed and displayed in NVivo software in which all answered to the same question was grouped into tree nodes. After that, data was described, analysed, and synthesized by pattern matching technique.

**Pattern Matching**

The study used a pattern-matching logic, which compares an empirically based pattern with a predicted one (Trochim, 1989, cited in Yin, 2009). In other words, in order to find out the roles and the desire qualities of the HODs at HaUI, the researcher referred closely to categories identified in the review of the literature. The researcher compared her findings with those of the literature. The similarities were kept before any new categories were added. The research found out which training needs of HODs at a western university setting are supported in the context of Vietnam and whether the newly identified categories contradict or extend the existing training needs.

3.6. **Perceived limitations to the methods**

Using qualitative case study as the anticipated overarching methodology, the study has some limitations, for example:

*Observer’s bias:* It is easy for the prejudices and attitudes of the researcher to bias the data, and therefore distort the findings. This is because the data must ‘go through’ the researcher’s mind before they are put on paper and therefore the researcher records only what she wants to see rather than what is there (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The researcher tried to limit her own bias by using appropriate study methods,
for example audio-recording interviews, having transcripts checked by participants before formal analysis, triangulation.

Observer effects: These are changes in the behaviour of participants due to the researcher presence (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The researcher took this into account by trying to interact with her subjects in a natural manner. Instead of a formal question-and-answer interview, she used semi-structured interviews to make the participants feel relaxed and therefore they could communicate what they really thought. The existing relationship between the interviewer and the interviewees might also make the interviewees feel comfortable.

3.7. Ways to maintain rigours and trustworthiness

To maintain rigour and trustworthiness throughout the qualitative aspects, the research used the following trustworthiness techniques suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

3.7.1. Triangulation

To make the findings credible, the technique of triangulation was used. Two main modes of triangulation were applied: multiple data sources and multiple methods. As stated, information about the training needs of HODs was provided not only by the heads but also by their managers and their subordinates. In addition, information was sought in a variety of ways: research reviews, document analysis, and interviews. The various sources of evidence helped increase ‘the probability that findings (and the interpretations based upon them) will be found to be more credible’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 307).

3.7.2. Peer debriefing

Peer debriefing was another technique to establish credibility. With peer debriefing, the researcher brought all the findings and tentative interpretations back to her supervisor who played ‘the devil’s advocate’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). Through discussion with the supervisor, the researcher eliminated any wild, inappropriate findings or confirmed what had been discovered. Peer debriefing was a useful experience for the researcher to be on the right track, thus increasing the credibility of the research.
3.7.3. Member checks

To ensure that the researcher’s reconstructions of the training needs of HODs are credible, the technique of member checks was used. After interviews, the transcription was handed over to the interviewees for validation. This checking gave the interviewees an opportunity to correct any errors of facts and viewpoints or to give any extra information. Member checking helps substantially to establish credibility.

3.7.4. A clear sampling method

To help future appliers of the study make judgments on transferability, the study provide the widest possible range of information for inclusion in the thick description. This was done through a critical purposeful sampling method as mentioned above.

3.7.5. The audit trail

To establish consistency and neutrality, audit trail was used. This involved thorough record keeping so that any extract or comment could be traced back to its source to prove authenticity. For example, audiotapes and transcripts, organizational documents and records, computer analyses, categories and themes were systematically recorded and kept for any auditing work.

3.7.6. Use of descriptive data and verbatim quotes

In order to present the world from the viewpoint of those being studied, all claims made in the final reports were backed up with quotes (i.e. evidence). This also ensures a thick and rich description of the study.
4. CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. **Introduction**

This chapter presents the results of the case study described in Chapter 3: The Research Design. The research concentrates on three groups of stakeholders: the Heads of eight Departments which offer university level programs (8 participants), the respective Deputy HODs (9 participants), and the University’s Board of Rectors and the Human Resources Manager and the Administration Training Manager (7 participant) (hereby referred to generally as senior managers/leaders).

The case study is approached in a highly structured way. Firstly, a profile of related aspects of HaUI will be made to set the study in context. After generally profiling HaUI, a profile of HaUI HODs is also presented. It is not a comprehensive report of all HODs at HaUI. Only those aspects that are considered relevant to understanding the position of HODs are presented, for example, academic background, previous leadership training and experience, and their aspirations and intentions. Finally, a description is provided of the stakeholders’ viewpoints, theme by theme such as the responsibilities of HODs, the desired qualities of effective HODs, their training needs, the reasons for the needs and suggestions for enhancing the HODs’ performance gaps.

4.2. **Findings and discussions**

4.2.1. A profile of HaUI

**History**

HaUI was established on 12/12/2005 from Hanoi Industrial College (originally the School of Practical Industry established by the French). The university evolved from a vocational training school with a history of over 110 years in technical training to become a college in 1999 before achieving university status in 2005. This pathway of development is quite common among new Vietnamese universities.
Mission, vision and future plans

Originally evolving from a vocational training school which specialized in technical education, HaUI is primarily a teaching and learning institution which offers 4 levels of training: degree (4 years) (15 programs), diploma (3 years) (19 programs), vocational training (2 years) (13 programs), and technical worker training (1/2 – 1 year) (16 programs). The university aims at becoming a leading teaching and learning institution in Vietnam and in South East Asia. It also has an ambition of becoming a prestigious centre of research, development, and knowledge transfer for the industry sector in Vietnam.

Organizational Structure

The university is managed by the Board of Rectors which includes one Rector and 4 Vice Rectors. The Rector is ultimately responsible for the day-to-day operation of the university and reports to the Ministry of Industry. Although the Vietnamese Universities’ Regulations (decision 153/2003/QD-TTg) stipulates that universities should have University Councils, HaUI does not have one. The Board of Rectors manage the university through the assistance of eight ‘functional’ departments: Human Resource, Finance, Logistics, Student Administration, International Relations, Research, and Quality Assurance. There are also other service departments such as Library, Security, Canteen, Health Care and Student Accommodation.

HaUI consists of 15 training departments which mainly deliver industry-related programs. The eight Departments which deliver Degree programs are: Mechanical Engineering, Electronics Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Chemistry Engineering, Information Technology, Economics, and Foreign Languages. Besides these core administrative units, other political and social associations also exist, for example, The Vietnamese Communist Party Organization, the Vietnamese Communist Youth Union Organization, Women Association, and Student Association. It should be noted that in Vietnam, the Vietnamese Communist Party Organization plays a leading role in all decision making bodies.
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Staffing and students

The university has a staff of 1300, of which 1100 are teachers (http://haui.edu.vn). With a total number of more than 30,000 students in 2008 (of which 8000 study Degree programs), HaUI is one of the biggest universities in Vietnam in terms of student numbers. The students mainly come from the Northern provinces of Vietnam. Students’ considerable research achievement has been in the Vietnamese Universities’ Robocon making competition. HaUI Robocon Team won the first prize in the Vietnam Robocon 2007 competition and represented Vietnamese universities to compete in Robocon Asia Pacific 2007. Three other students of the university also won gold medals in Asian technical skills competitions.

Internationalization

The university has emphasized developing partnerships with international organizations and has started to internationalize itself. It has trans-national education programs with TAFE South Australia providing diploma programs in information technology and business administration. It also collaborates with APTECH from India to train software developers. Several other technical workers training cooperation programs have also been developed with Korean, Taiwan, and Japanese operations. In particular, LETCO (Labour Supplying And Training Cooperation Company) has sent students and graduates to work in Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Libya, Kuwait, and Taiwan.

4.2.2. A profile of HODs at HaUI

4.2.2.1. The Departments’ characteristics

All of the 8 HODs which offer Degree programs participated in the study. Two were females and six were males. The number of their tenured staff range from under 30 (in 2 departments) to from 40 to 60 (in 4 departments), and to from 70 to 80 (in 2 departments). Each department has one or two Deputy Heads and from 1 to 3 administrative staff to support the Head in managing the department. The number of students enrolling in each department also vary greatly: less than 500 (1 department), from 2000 to 3000 (1 department), from 3000 to 4000 (3 departments), from 5000 to
Chapter 4: Findings and discussions

6000 (2 departments) and over 10000 (1 department). Six older departments deliver all 4 types of training: degree, diploma, secondary vocational training certificate, and primary vocational training certificate. The Departments of Chemistry Engineering and Foreign Languages, which were established when the institution became a college, only offer degrees and diplomas.

4.2.2.2. The HODs’ demographic information

To have a better interpretation of the HODs’ viewpoints, the researcher asked them a number of questions about demographic characteristics such as academic background, previous leadership training and experience, period of time in the current role, and their aspirations and intentions.

The HODs’ academic background

As HaUI is a new university, the HODs have been in their current role for only between one and three years (3 HODs) or five to ten years (5 HODs). Before their current position, respondents most commonly held a general academic Head of Program or Deputy HOD appointment. Although the Vietnamese Universities’ Regulations (decision 153/2003/QD-TTg) stipulates that HODs must earn a Doctoral Qualification, only 2 HODs have Doctoral Degrees, the rest 6 HODs have Masters. Only one HOD serves as a committee member of an international committee in his area of expertise, the majority of them have not participated in any professional organizations. While most reported an intention to keep the position if being re-elected or move to more senior leadership roles if being chosen, one determined not to take the role again after their term of appointment ended.

How the HODs learn the job

Almost all of the HODs took the position without any prior management training or education. Only during their tenure, some attended short courses about management and leadership, some participated in middle-level or high-level political theories programs run by The Ho Chi Minh National Politics and Administrative Institute - the country's leading institute to train leaders and key managerial officials for the
Communist Party, the State, the Vietnamese Fatherland Front and other socio-political organizations. In general, most of them were under prepared for the post.

The HODs’ motivation for taking the HOD roles

Most Heads said that they came to the position out of a sense of duty following a request from the university. The HODs are often selected by the Rector after formally consulting the Vice-Rectors and other HODs by getting their votes ‘for’ or ‘against’ the potential candidates. The HODs did not actively apply for the post. They were very passive in terms of their career aspirations path, especially with respect to moving up the managerial ladder. This finding is quite different from those by Wolverton et al (1999) in which the most frequently nominated reason in both Australia and the US for a HOD to take up the post was for personal development or necessity to refocus or reinvigorate the department or to be in control during the change phase.

4.2.3. The responsibilities of the HODs

In order to identify the training needs of the HODs, the study investigated their responsibilities. The knowledge of the HODs position was the foundation to understanding the nature of the HODs’ work and their training needs. This understanding also helped the researcher to give more appropriate suggestions for meeting HODs’ training needs.

4.2.3.1. An analysis of position description

The authorities and responsibilities of HODs are stated in Vietnamese Universities’ Regulations (decision 153/2003/QD-TTg) issued on the 30th of July 2003 by the Prime Minister of Vietnam. At HaUI, responsibilities of HODs are elaborated in more detail in each department’s ISO 9001: 2000 documents. These HODs’ tasks are summarized into 5 major areas, which, nominally, are quite similar to the key management areas of middle-level academic managers outlined in Chapter 2. These include department management, program management, student management, budget and resources management, and office management.
From document analysis, although there is mention of strategic planning, the central responsibilities of the HODs seem to revolve around program management. Even in terms of staff management, HODs’ most important job seems to be approving lecturers’ teaching schedules and lesson plans, and ensuring that academic staff complies with the approved teaching schedules. Staff assessment also seems to centre on evaluating lecturers’ teaching activities. Lecturers’ non-direct teaching tasks, for example, research are hardly considered.

4.2.3.2. A general impression of the use of the HODs’ job description:

As stated, a job description for HODs is documented in each department’s ISO 9001:2000 documents; however, it does not have much value in practice. This document can neither fully describe the tasks of the HODs nor the HODs’ actual activities with respect to all the responsibilities stated in the document:

Now the Human Resource Department has written job descriptions for various roles including HODs; however, they are not in detail, they only cover the major tasks (Senior Manager S).

Although ISO 9001: 2000 states what authorities and responsibilities we have, in fact we do a lot more because we cannot record all work we do in a day. It is similar to a housewife who can never tell her husband exactly what she has done during the day (HOD H)

There is a job description for HODs; however I generally do not pay attention to it, I only follow the university’s academic year plan (HOD F)

In fact, the job description states a lot of duties; however, at present, we are unable to do them all. (HOD E)

One HOD commented that ‘There is no uniformity in management practices among departments of the university’ (Deputy HOD K). One of the Vice Rectors also noted that ‘At present, the job description does not have much value because neither the HODs play their roles based on it nor the Human Resources Department uses it for HODs’ performance management’ (Senior Manager S).
This finding supports those of Brown and Duguid (1996) that formal descriptions of work may only be ‘abstract knowledge’, which often distort or obscure intricacies of actual practice. In this situation, instead of relying solely on ‘documents’ for information, in-depth interviews were used to uncover what the HODs actually do at HaUI so that their training needs can be accurately identified. In other words, the technique of triangulation was employed.

4.2.3.3. The HOD’s tasks from participants’ perceptions

The findings from interviews with different stakeholders are summarized in table 5 regarding what the HODs actually do at HaUI.

Table 5: An overview of the HODs’ tasks from participants’ perceptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key management areas</th>
<th>Neglected areas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program management</td>
<td>Strategic management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic staff management</td>
<td>Budget management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilities management</td>
<td>External relationship management</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Personal academic activities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Management of students and administrative staff</td>
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</table>

4.2.3.3.1. Key management areas

The HODs appeared to take a wide range of duties. They were described as ‘small Rectors’ (Deputy HOD G) whose main tasks centre on three key management areas: program management, academic staff management, and facilities management:

As for me, the HODs’ tasks are documented in the state’s regulations; however, from my own experience of being a HOD and in practice, there are 3 areas: program management, human resource management, and facilities management (Senior Manager T).
Chapter 4: Findings and discussions

Program management

In program management, the specific work items for the HODs include developing training programs (curriculum frameworks and teaching contents) and supervising academic staff in carrying out these programs to ensure that the programs are delivered as planned. The HODs’ role in program management was depicted clearly by one Deputy Head as below:

*When the university has plans to open a new program, there is a university plan for developing the program. In other words, the Registrar often sets up the plan and sends it to the Department, and the Department has to follow the plan, which has already approved by the Board of Rector. The HODs’ role is central. The HOD is the person who organizes all activities to carry out the plan, specifically assigns concrete duties to the Heads of Subjects, then supervises how they fulfil their duties, and finally synthesises all the work and reports to senior managers. After the program has been approved, the HOD organizes all necessary activities to deliver the program (Deputy HOD G).*

Academic staff management

With respect to the management of academic staff, the HODs are mainly responsible for making recommendations for new staff selection, giving a monthly evaluation of lecturers’ performance with regards to teaching workloads and work quality, and chairing meetings to recommend raises in staff remunerations, awards, and promotions.

*The HOD makes a recruitment plan based on the needs of the Academic Groups, and then seeks approval from Human Resource Manager and the Rector. After that, the HOD manages the selection process at department level before recommending candidates to university selection committee for final selection (Deputy HOD P).*

*At present the role of the HOD in human resource management is rather vague, in fact, it is selecting seasonal teachers, recommending candidates for tenured teacher selection, working with the HR department to select staff, review monthly to see if any teachers violate university regulations, for example, miss a staff meeting (Deputy HOD I).*

*The HOD chairs meetings for staff evaluation, remunerations and promotions (Deputy HOD L).*
Facilities management

Not much information was forthcoming on facilities management, although this topic was commonly referred to as a major area of task for the HODs. Their main duties are keeping all the department facilities and equipment safe, utilizing all the equipment provided, and making proposals for fixing current equipment or buying new equipment.

4.2.3.2. Neglected management areas

The HODs’ five neglected management areas are strategic management, budget management, external communication, personal academic activities, administrative staff management, and student management.

Strategic management

Strategic management didn’t seem to be a central task for the HODs. Only one HOD mentioned strategic planning as his first priority and was proud that it was a task that differentiated himself from other HODs. The rest of the informants, including the senior leaders didn’t really mention this task. In the job description for the HODs, the only work item related to strategic planning is ‘to work with the Department Research Committee to develop a strategic plan for department training programs’.

Budget management

The HODs at HaUI were not responsible for the departmental budget. Finance is managed centrally at the university level. The departments do not have any funds to control by itself. The HODs, therefore, are not in charge of generating incomes for the departments. The departments mainly bring money to the university through students’ tuition fees.

External relationship management

In the HOD’s position description, liaising with external constituencies is not clearly defined. In practice, most of the HODs have to do this task; however, it does not take much of their time. When they do, they mainly initiate and maintain liaison with enterprises, factories, manufacturers, workshops, etc to get student internship
placements. Other types of activities with external institutions are very limited. In fact, only one HOD managed to obtain resources for the department from external sponsors. One HOD was invited to offer on-the-job training programs for an external company.

**Personal academic activities**

**Teaching and research**

Almost all HODs could spend only one – fifths of their time on personal academic work. Although the university regulations stipulates that the HODs spend 50% of their office hours on personal academic activities and 50% on administrative duties, seven out of eight HODs said that they could only spend from 20% to 30% on personal academic activities, mainly on direct teaching. 70% to 80% of their time was devoted to daily management and administration. Almost no time was left for doing research. Only one HOD with a Doctoral Qualification has worked as a Principal Researcher in a national research project. Another HOD has several research papers published in international and national journals. The remaining HODs neither have their own research projects nor have published any academic papers.

**Professional networking**

The HODs at HaUI don’t seem to have networked much beyond the university. They might be too busy, still too new in the position to network, or financially unsupported.

> I often get invitations to take part in professional conferences; however, due to the heavy workload, I cannot participate. I nearly die with my own work in the department alone. (HOD B)

> I have only taken the role for a year so I haven’t participated much. In addition, I am overloaded with the administrative work and do not have time. (HOD E)

> I receive invitations to conferences nearly every month. However, I cannot participate. If I participate, the procedure is very complex because I need money and I wonder whether the university will send me to. I need several thousand US dollars for each time and I am sure that I cannot be financially supported. (HOD H)
Management of student and administrative staff

Management of administrative staff and students seem to be marginal to the HODs at HaUI. Since each HOD only has one or two administrative assistants, supervising and evaluating them is not an important task. As students are grouped into a ‘fixed’ class which is managed by a lecturer throughout their course, the HODs do not have to directly deal much with student affairs.

4.2.3.4. A critical comment

Analyses from both university documents and participant interviews reveal that the HODs at HaUI seem to experience role ambiguity, enjoy a lower level of autonomy, and also act more as a manager than as a leader in their position compared to their fellow colleagues as depicted in the literature review.

Role ambiguity

There seems to be a considerable role ambiguity for the HODs at HaUI (similar findings can be found in Gmelch 1991; Gmelch and Burns 1994; Gmelch and Carroll 1991; Singleton 1987; Wolverton et al. 1999a, cited in Trochia and Andrus, 2003). Although a job description does exist for the HODs, this document is rarely used in practice. Through asking the HODs what their tasks were, the researcher realised that each HOD seemed to focus on different management areas depending on their strengths and interests. For example, HOD G emphasized working collaboratively with industries in providing students with on the job training courses while HOD H focused on developing the academic staff professionally.

Because role ambiguity can contribute to inefficiencies, diminish job satisfaction and reduce quality of overall management (Scott, 2008), this problem needs to be solved urgently. Otherwise, each department development trajectory may not depend on the university’s overall development plans but on each HOD’s personal enthusiasm and interest. Consequently, the university can hardly develop as a coherent whole. Possibly, the HODs’ roles should be made more specific.
A low level of autonomy

The HODs can hardly make decisions on department matters by themselves. The job description stipulates that they have to consult the Department Research Committee before making decisions on the contents of programs. They are also required to seek the Rectors’ approval on department annual teaching schedules, any types of expenditure, and even for fixing current equipment. It was also revealed through interviews that some HODs even always ask for the approval of the Department’s Communist Party Unit Committee Members before organizing a department meeting. (In Vietnam, the Communist Party Committees often have the most important say in any decisions made by organizational authorities).

‘The department has monthly meetings. Before such meetings, the Department’s Communist Party Unit Committee Members meet. Because we have governance under the leadership of the Communist Party, if something needs to be done, the Department’s Communist Party Unit Committee Members meet and delegate the tasks to the department managers’ (Deputy HOD M).

The HODs’ low level of autonomy possibly prevents them from being an effective academic manager. Therefore, the HODs should be empowered to do a better job.

More as a manager than as a leader role

In Scott et al.’s (2008) definition, while a manager’ role is more operational, i.e. focuses more on a day to day matters such as human resources and facilities, a leader’s role is more strategic and focuses more on the future. In addition, while a manager focuses on ensuring the unit functions efficiently and effectively, a leader has to set the vision for where the unit will head. The HODs at HaUI seem to be mainly in charge of the day to day administrative duties rather than focusing on developing the departmental vision. Doing the things right rather than doing the right thing appears to be their task. The HODs, therefore, seem to assume a more managerial role than a leader role.

According to Kotter (1990), excessive management produces compliance, passivity, and order for order’s sake; it discourages risk-taking and stifles creativity and long term vision. Because a balanced combination of management and leadership is needed for a work unit or organization’s success, an enhanced leadership role should probably be promoted among the HODs at HaUI.
4.2.4. The desired qualities of an effective HOD

In order to assess the training needs of the HODs, the study identified the informants’ perceptions of an effective HOD. Firstly, all participants were given sufficient time during interviews to state the qualities that they thought as essential. After that, probing questions were asked to uncover any additional information. The probing questions were based on the areas of tasks and specific scale of knowledge, skills, and ability for HODs developed by Aziz et al. (2005) (See Appendix 5 for the guided questions). Answers to these follow-up questions helped the interviewer understand more clearly why certain qualities were important with regard to specific tasks. The follow-up information also provided the foundation for the researcher to interpret why certain training needs are required for the HODs.

As stated, the study used Scott et al. (2008) validated capability framework for effectiveness in higher education to analyse the desired qualities of an effective HOD. The findings show that all five capability domains in the framework were identified as important for a HOD’s desired qualities. What was distinctive is the weight on each domain, the specific elements in each domain, and the varied level of focus among the three groups of informants. For example, generic and role specific competencies appeared to carry more weight than personal, interpersonal, and cognitive competencies. The specific elements in the former categories include a high level of expertise, excellent operational skills, and a wide range of general knowledge. This section presents findings about the types of competencies and capabilities that count for the HODs at HaUI (see Table 6).

Table 6: The desired qualities of effective HODs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competencies and Capabilities Domains</th>
<th>Specific elements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generic and role specific competencies</td>
<td>A high level of expertise</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Excellent operational skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wide range of general knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Capabilities</td>
<td>Good internal relationships</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wide external networks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cognitive capabilities</td>
<td>A great vision for potential programs</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>An excellent planning capability</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responsiveness and Flexibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal capability</td>
<td>Decisiveness and commitment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A role model</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strong credibility</td>
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4.2.4.1. Generic and role specific competencies – the foremost desired qualities

4.2.4.1.1. A high level of academic expertise

All informants considered a high level of specialised expertise as the most important quality: ‘An ‘ideal’ HOD must be a top expert in his/her field, the best person not only in his/her own department and university but also in the field generally’ (HOD A). There are three main reasons for expertise to be the most essential quality.

First of all, it originates from the ‘training’ function of the department and the ‘teaching’ supervision role of the HODs:

> Because the department centres mainly on teaching activities, the HOD must have strong knowledge in the department’s specialised areas so that he knows how to manage the department well (Deputy HOD N).

> When the HOD is very good at his/her academic areas, s/he can visualise a lot of issues related to academic activities. When the HOD manages a lecturer, it almost means to manage the lecturer’s academic activities, not him/her as a person. Therefore, the HOD’s academic knowledge must be very good (Deputy HOD I).

Secondly, the HODs need to be excellent at the department’s training areas to establish their credibility with followers, which is the foundation for their management and leadership:

> First of all, the HODs must have an adequate level of expertise to gain the trust and respect from the followers, if the HODs are not trusted by the followers, they can not manage (Senior Manager R).

Lastly, the HOD with a good academic ability can help facilitate research development in the department:

> The HOD must be excellent at their specialization so that they can direct research for the department, for example, when the academic staff propose a research project, the HODs who are also the Chair of the Research Committee must know if the proposed project is needed, if it has been done else where, and at which level it should be reviewed. If the HODs do not have great academic expertise, they are limited in this area (Deputy HOD M).
4.2.4.1.2. Excellent operational skills

Almost all informants evaluated excellent operational skills as essential. The HODs must know how to organize necessary activities to carry out the department tasks:

In implementing a task, the HODs must know how to make plans, how to organize and execute work after planning, check and evaluate how work has been done. If problems occur, the HODs must know how to figure out the best way to respond timely (Senior Manager W).

In organizing activities to perform set tasks, the HODs must know who is the most suitable person to delegate a certain task to. That is because the HODs cannot do all the tasks by themselves and staff all have different strengths and weaknesses.

The HODs must know the capabilities of each staff member in the department. The HODs must know their strengths and weaknesses to allocate relevant responsibilities to make work run smoothly (Deputy HOD N).

The HODs should also know how to respond to the uncertain nature of daily management practice:

A HOD must know task-oriented methods to handle unexpected situations. In other words, when a task is given, a HOD should know who to contact and who to delegate (HOD H).

4.2.4.1.3. A wide range of general knowledge

All three groups of informants perceived that ideal HODs need to have general knowledge about society, administrative and state management, especially educational management. They are required to understand government laws, university regulations, and how different university units work. This knowledge helps them understand their roles better. In addition, in order to help them integrate well in the era of globalization, they are expected to master at least one foreign language, particularly English. To work effectively with international partners, the HODs also need to understand communication principles and certain international cultures. However, general knowledge was not stressed as strongly as a high level of expertise and ability in organizing and executing work.
4.2.4.2. Interpersonal capabilities – a ‘must’ quality

The study found two major elements in the interpersonal capability domain: maintaining a good relationship with internal constituents and developing wide networks with external partners. The internal constituents include department members, senior leaders, and other university units. The external partners are any institutions or individuals that have links with the department or university.

Maintaining internal relationships

All informants agreed that an effective HOD must know how to maintain a good relationship not only with all department members but also with external departments at the university and with the university leaders. One HOD commented:

It’s highly unlikely for whoever acts as a HOD to successfully fulfil the role if that person does not keep a good relationship with functional departments and especially with senior leaders. In Vietnam, whether a person can be successful or not may depend heavily on his/her skills in maintaining relationships (HOD H).

Within the department, if the HOD can develop a high level of collegiality, the university and department directions are highly likely to be followed well by department members. A HOD is like ‘a chief sailor who should know how to direct the department ship to the agreed direction’ (Senior Manager W).

In order to do so, the HODs are expected to have very good interpersonal skills. These skills entail the ability to understand their own personal feelings and those of other people, and to consider other people’s feelings when making decisions (emotional intelligence), to understand how someone feels because they can imagine what it is like to be them (empathising), to understand staff and students’ expectations, and to listen to different viewpoints before coming to a decision. All in all, the most important attribute is the ability to assemble people and make them work for a common purpose.

With university leaders, an effective HOD should know how to convince them to support and approve department proposals. To do so, the HODs should know when
and where to make a proposal to university leaders and be able to express themselves clearly and persuasively. With other functional and service departments, the HODs should also establish very good rapport so that the departmental work can run smoothly. The reason (the unspoken law) is as follow:

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\text{At the moment, the university’s regulations haven’t been fully developed yet. Some rules are irrelevant, some are outdated, and some don’t even exist. Therefore, how work is implemented sometimes depends totally on the person who is actually handling it. In some cases, whether a regulation is applied or not is subjected to people’s personal choices. As a result, if you don’t have a good relationship, work can be very difficult (Deputy HOD K).}
\]

In short, maintaining good relationships with department members, senior leaders, and other university units was considered a very important quality for an effective HOD. This finding is similar to those of some other researchers (Jennerich 1981; Staton-Spicer and Spicer (1987), cited in Trochcia & Andrus (2003), Filan & Segren (2003), Trochcia & Andrus (2003), Bryan (2007), and Scott et el. (2008)). Scott (2008, p 29), for example, found that the cultural value of ‘collegiality’ means that ‘winning followership’ is especially important in higher education management and leadership. Bryman (2007) also found that an individual’s or group’s capacity to influence ‘the goal-directed behaviour of others’ was a distinctive feature of leading in an educational context. Aziz et al. (2005) also found the HOD’s ability to communicate department or program needs to upper level administrators to be very critical.

**Developing and maintaining wide external networks**

The ability to develop a wide range of external networks was evaluated by the HODs as very significant:

\[
\text{External relationships are very important. For example, when you intend to open a new program you need to have related information, if you do not have the needed information you have to seek for it from outside. Later on, you also need a lot of support from outside. It can be finance, human resources, or facilities and equipment. Internal networks are insufficient, you need to establish external relationships so that people know your department and they can invest for you. External networks are very important. (HOD C)}
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You should have good relationships with enterprises so that they will recruit your graduates and also they can tell you what they need from your students and you can train your students in that direction (HOD F)

The HODs also need to establish networks with researcher circles outside the university. This relationship can help the HOD to have update information about research, training, and general social development. (HOD A)

The Deputy HODs shared the points stated above by the HODs. They also added that if the HODs have wide external networks, department members can benefit from them. For example, through their networks, the HODs can provide academic staff with information about professional conferences and workshops, and most up-to-date information about technological changes. By networking widely, the HODs can have more information on research and knowledge transfer projects; therefore they can enhance their ability in attracting resources for the department, helping staff improve their skills and knowledge. The senior leaders did not regard networking as highly as the HODs and the Deputy HODs; however, they also expected the HODs to develop networks with respective HODs from other universities to learn from their administrative and academic leadership.

4.2.4.3. Cognitive capabilities – a quality desired more by senior managers

Three elements were found in the cognitive capabilities needed for successful academic leadership. They are diagnosis, strategy, and flexibility and responsiveness. These elements are similar to those of Scott et al. (2008); however, the specific focus and attributes in each element seem to be different.

Diagnosis and Strategies

In program management

All the three groups of participants highly valued the HODs’ ability to analyse and select the best potential training programs for the department. It was expected that the HODs are able to evaluate the current programs, anticipate their future development, their potential market demands, and select the most suitable programs to deliver in the future.
Programs play a very important role in the existence and development of the department. Within the department specialised areas, the HODs should be able to choose or not choose to provide a certain program. The choices must be based on market demands, department capacity, and the university financial capacity. (HOD C).

At the present we are providing three degree programs. However, if the HOD has a vision, he must know that as a university, HaUI will not stop at delivering only degrees but will have to provide postgraduates programs as well. How the department will develop depends on the HOD’s ability to set the right direction (Deputy HOD O).

In other areas of management

The university leaders also expected the HODs to have sound planning skills in research management, staff development, and facilities management.

In terms of research management, the HODs are expected to develop both long term and short term plans. With respect to staff development, the HODs should know how to make a strategic departmental plan based on the university’s overall plan:

While the university has an overall plan, the departments must also have its own plan. For example, if the university has a plan to train staff both locally and overseas, the HODs must have a plan to see who can be selected to go overseas. In order to do that, the HODs must have a vision for the department development in terms of size, training areas, and so on. Based on the vision, the HODs advise the university leaders how to develop staff to realise that vision (Senior Manager R).

In terms of facilities management, the HODs are expected to develop a rational plan for developing departmental physical assets. Because current equipments and facilities at HaUI are neither used optimally nor managed well, the HODs should have plans for using, maintaining and fixing broken equipment. After an inventory, the HODs must be able to classify equipment according to its value, price, and age for planning purposes. In buying new equipment, the HODs must make the best choice in terms of current constraints.

Now we lack so many things but we cannot buy everything at once. Therefore, the HODs must decide which equipment to buy first, which one to buy later. They must consider various options and propose the best one to the university (Senior Manager T).
In general, senior managers seemed to expect more from the HODs in terms of visioning and setting proactive operational plans. It is unlikely that the discrepancies here simply indicate the stakeholders’ expectations of the HODs’ ability to ‘wear different hats’. The different levels of expectations are more likely to indicate that the university’s core managerial groups are inconsistent in their perceptions of the HODs’ tasks. In other words, the HODs’ roles are ambiguous. To reduce role ambiguity, there should be unanimity among the diverse sub-groups on the HODs’ tasks and desired qualities.

The ability to set department visions appears to be highly valued in the literature. Jennerich 1981; Staton-Spicer and Spicer 1987, cited in Trocia and Andrus, 2003, Filan & Segren (2003), Bryan (2007), and Scott et al. (2008), Aziz et al. (2005), and Trocia and Andrus (2003) all identified leadership skills as a significant attribute for a middle level academic manager. Bryan (2007), for example, found a clear sense of direction/strategic vision as number one leadership behaviour of an effective HOD. Leading strategic planning and change is the 5th component in Filan & Segren’s (2003) six critical components of skills and competencies associated with leadership effectiveness.

**Responsiveness and flexibility**

Responsiveness and flexibility was stressed by only a small number of participants. As stated, the HODs are expected to respond intelligently to problems that arise during implementation of a plan. They should be flexible in using different management skills to suit concrete situations. In dealing with difficult staff, they should use various strategies flexibly, for example, encouraging, educating, and even punishing, if necessary.

**4.2.4.4. Personal capability – the least important quality**

Only the senior managers considered personal capability as an important quality for an ‘ideal’ HOD at HaUI. They expected that the HODs must possess a high level of decisiveness and commitment, act as a role model and have strong credibility.
Commitment refers to the HODs’ energy, passion, and enthusiasm for work and especially with respect to the department’s training areas. Commitment also means that the HODs may have to sacrifice their personal benefits for those of the department. They must be hard-working and patient in achieving the set goals.

Another essential attribute in the HODs’ personal capability is decisiveness. An excellent HOD is expected to be willing to take hard decisions and take responsibility for them. One senior leader commented that ‘if the HODs are afraid of the challenges and responsibilities, they cannot succeed’ (Senior Manager T).

Acting as a role model is also a valued attribute for an ‘ideal’ HOD. Being a good example enables the HODs to possibly influence other departmental members. It also gives them more authority to require staff to comply with regulations. These entire attributes can help the HODs gain more credibility which further staff members’ trust of them.

Critically, in the case study, personal capability was emphasized only by the senior leader informants. In contrast, this attribute has been highly valued in the literature. For example, Leaming (1998) and Roach (1976), cited in Trocia and Andrus (2003) found that effective heads possess the traits of openness, integrity, honesty, and objectivity, and are both task and people oriented. Mitchell 1987, cited in Trocia and Andrus (2003) found that outstanding chairpersons at three universities were found to be unselfish; fair; respectful; collegial; flexible; compassionate; cooperative; and, not surprisingly, trustworthy. Bryan (2007) also found effective HOD to be considerate, treat academic staff fairly and with integrity, and be trustworthy and have personal integrity. Scott et al. (2008) identified 5 personal attributes as critical for academic leadership effectiveness: being true to one’s personal values & ethics; remaining calm under pressure or when things take an unexpected turn; understanding one’s personal strengths & limitations; energy & passion for learning and teaching; and admitting to & learning from one’s errors.
4.2.4.5. A summary and critical evaluation

The study found all five nominal capability domains in Scott et al. (2008) capability framework for effectiveness in higher education as essential for an ideal HOD (generic and role-specific competencies, personal and interpersonal capability, and cognitive capability). However, the specific elements in each domain are different and the level of focus on each domain varies among the three groups of informants.

Firstly, the generic and role specific competencies include a high level of expertise, excellent operational skills, and a wide range of general knowledge. Interpersonal capability comprises the ability to establish a good internal relationship and a wide external network. Cognitive capability consists of the capacity to diagnose and set vision, and the ability to be responsive and flexible in managing work.

Secondly, the findings suggest that ‘hard’ competencies such as general knowledge, specialization knowledge, and organizational skills were considered more important for the HODs in this case study. Other ‘soft’ skills such as cognitive and personal capabilities were regarded as less important. In other words, while all of the three groups of informants highly valued generic and specific capabilities, only the senior managers highly evaluated cognitive and personal capabilities.

In comparison with the desired qualities of an effective HOD in the literature review in chapter 2, it was revealed that while the literature indicates a preference more for academic leadership capabilities, the HODs’ set of desired qualities appear to be more ‘competencies – biased’. This finding supports nicely those of Scott et al. (2008) who argue that ‘competencies’ were seen as being associated more with managing than leading. In other words, the case study findings on the HOD roles indicate that the HODs’ work is more managerial than leadership oriented. Those on the HOD desired qualities show that the HODs’ expected qualities was connected more with ‘competencies’.

While it is true that these generic and role specific competencies are essential for any HODs to perform their roles, the finding may make us question the value of the HODs’ job description and requirements of knowledge and skills at HaUI. If these more generic and role specific competencies are clearly stipulated and commonly understood, this should then reduce confusion over role expectations. Once again, standardization of knowledge and skills seem to be a structural problem at HaUI.
4.2.5. The training needs

A brief summary of the HODs’ roles and work context

At this stage we can summarise the current situation at HaUI in which the HODs are working. HaUI was a newly established university which does not have all necessary regulations. The HODs’ major job was to look after teaching related activities. They came to the position mostly out of a sense of duty. Most of them were very passive in taking the role and generally not prepared for the job. They have many difficulties in performing their role. For example, only one or two administrative staff is provided to assist them manage a department which may have up to 10,000 students. Their level of autonomy is also very limited which make them unable to make timely decisions. Due to so many ad hoc requests, they have to spend most of their time on administrative duties. Very little time is spent on academic activities, especially research. Under such circumstances, it is clear that the HODs’ training needs are considerable.

The HODs’ training needs

Nearly all participants strongly agreed that there is currently a big gap between the HODs’ current competencies and capacities and the desired ones that may make the HODs more efficient and effective. Only one HOD, who is going to retire, said that he didn’t have any training needs. Table 7 is a summary of the HODs’ training needs, which was analysed based on Scot et al. (2008) framework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competencies and Capabilities domains</th>
<th>Specific needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generic and role specific competencies</td>
<td>To study generic management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To learn about the roles of the HODs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To learn a second language (English)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To learn research methods and practice doing research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To improve specialised expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal capability</td>
<td>To improve communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive capability</td>
<td>To have a vision and planning skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal capability</td>
<td>To self train for moral and professional qualities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.5.1. Generic and role specific competencies – the strongest training need

The HODs’ most critical training needs are to enhance their competencies in generic and role specific management. Findings in the previous sections show that the HODs were expected to have strong generic and role specific competencies, namely a high level of expertise, excellent operational skills, and wide legal and social knowledge. In reality, the HODs haven’t met these expectations. In terms of academic credentials, the majority of them don’t have Doctoral Degrees, as required by the state regulations. Their research capability is also quite poor. Most of the HODs were not trained either formally or informally prior to taking up their roles. Their current management practices are based mainly on anecdotal experience. Consequently, the HODs should learn more about generic management, the HODs’ roles, a second language, research methods and practice, and their areas of specialised expertise.

Learning about generic management

All participants expressed a strong need for the HODs to study basic approaches to management. The reason is that currently, the HODs’ most important task is about management. This training area is the first priority for most HODs:

*I have a great need to be trained in management because I have not learnt about it before. I was selected to be the HOD mostly based on my long time experience in the field and my expertise. Therefore, I need to be equipped with generic management (HOD G).*

*If there is a training program, I would like to learn about management, all areas of management (HOD E).*

In stressing the critical need to train the HODs in management skills, one senior manager noted:

*For HaUI to provide better training programs, it is not the matter of whether the HODs are Doctors or not. It is their management knowledge and skills that count. These are needed most and immediately (Senior Manager S).*
Some HODs and deputy HODs stated a training need in specific areas of management, for example human resource management, facilities management, and office management. However, the senior managers expressed a great need for the HODs to learn organizational skills. This need is similar to ‘skill development’ as identified by Wolverton et al. (2005) (the desire of HODs to possess a skill set that helps them work successfully in the position).

In further discussion of the reasons for this specific need, it was revealed that organizational skills for the HODs are critical because at HaUI, work procedures haven’t been fully developed. There are insufficient work procedures to cover all task areas. Therefore, when a university plan is given, each HOD must think of a way to best implement it. Given that the HODs’ work is based on personal experiences, this need is reasonable. To respond to this need, perhaps standardization of work procedures would be appropriate.

**Learning about the roles of HODs**

Both the experienced and non-experienced HODs expressed the need to learn about their powers and responsibilities. Given that there is great ambiguity in the roles of the HODs at HaUI, this need is logical.

*There should be a course that clearly identifies the responsibilities of the HODs and what each area of tasks entails. From this list of tasks, there should be classes on what and how the HODs should do to perform these tasks best. Previously, the university have not had any training courses; all HODs learn the job by their own experience (HOD D).*

Some participants stated clearly the need to train the HODs in developing a training program, for instance, how to write course objectives and how to develop course structures. This need links closely to the HODs’ program management task.

The need to learn about the appropriate roles of HOD seems to be very fundamental. It is similar to the need to learn the job duties of being an academic chairman as proposed by Wolverton el el. (2005). In a newly established university, the HOD job is new, even to the more experienced HODs. This training need reconfirms the HODs’ role ambiguity identified above. This issue must be properly addressed.
Second language acquisition (particularly English)

In the era of internationalization and globalization, it is not surprising that the HODs have a need to learn foreign languages, particularly English. While there is a growing need to cooperate with international institutions, only a few HODs can communicate fluently in English. Poor English language proficiency is a great barrier in communicating with foreign partners and in updating new knowledge. Thus, improvement of English capability is needed.

Upgrading research methodologies and practice

The HODs in the study have a need to learn research methodologies and have more practical experience in doing research. This need may sound strange for someone from a more developed country. However, at a new university like HaUI, where the major activities are teaching and learning, this need is considerable. Organizing research activities for both academic staff and students was identified as an important task for the HODs, especially now that HaUI has university status.

One HOD claimed that ‘research should be regarded as the top mission in all departments’ (HOD H). One Deputy Head stated that ‘the HOD has to give research directions to staff, ask Academic Groups to apply their research proposals at not only department but also higher levels’ (Deputy HOD O). However, as stated, due to the new status of the university, together with the time constraints, the HODs do not have strong capability in doing research. As a result, some HODs desire to learn both research methods as well as practice research. To make HaUI a prestigious centre of research in Vietnam as expressed in the university’s mission, this need must be urgently addressed.

Improving specialised expertise

Improving specialised expertise was also identified as a training need for the HODs; however, it is a weak need. The deputy HODs said that the HODs need to have a Doctoral qualification and have to update their knowledge regularly. The senior managers also mentioned these aspects of the role but they didn’t consider them to be
critical at this stage. The HODs themselves didn’t seem to consider advancing their specialised expertise to be a strong need at the moment, possibly due to personal circumstances. Only one young HOD saw the need to take part in a Doctoral program. Among the remaining seven HODs, two of them are retiring within two years, another is going to work as a Rector at a new technical training college, and two already have a Doctoral degree.

4.2.5.2. Interpersonal Capability Training Needs

The ability to maintain a good internal relationship and a wide external network was considered a ‘must’ quality for an effective HOD. The HODs were expected to be a professional ‘diplomat’. But in reality, most of the HODs do not possess the necessary knowledge and skills to be great communicators. As a consequence, there is a strong need to improve the HODs’ communication capability.

*It is very necessary for the HODs to improve their communication skills. At this stage, this training need is even greater than the need in facilities and finance management. It is a skill that the HOD needs every moment at work. If communication events are conducted successfully, the working environment can become friendlier, people can become closer and internal solidarity can be created (Senior Manager W).*

Although more communication specific needs were not stated clearly, it can be interpreted that this need is the desire to employ emotional intelligence to influence people. While ‘high collectivism’ (valuing group membership) has been a cultural value in the Vietnamese society for a long time and the HODs’ ability to communicate, especially the ability to pull people in the same direction was highly evaluated in the study, the HODs should improve their interpersonal skills in order be more effective managers and leaders.

4.2.5.3. Cognitive Capability Training Needs

Only one HOD had the need to learn how to make a strategic plan (this HOD seemed to be the most active and effective HOD to date). The other HODs didn’t express this need. The other two groups of participants, however, showed more concern in developing this capability for the HOD.
Chapter 4: Findings and discussions

The deputy HODs’ common complaints about this deficiency were:

> With regards to academic management, the HOD perhaps focuses mainly on ad hoc issues. The HOD is not able to develop an overall direction (Deputy HOD I).

> At the moment, nobody is in charge of making department strategic plans in all training departments in general, in my department in particular (Deputy HOD M).

The senior leaders expected that the HODs would be trained to develop a vision for the department as well as to make both strategic and operational plans.

> The HODs need to learn how to make a strategic and operational plan for the department. A lot of departments don’t have any strategic or operational plans (Senior Manager S).

> Perhaps the most important skill that the HODs need at present is to develop an operational plan based on the university plan. In other words they must be able to visualize all the tasks needed to be done and then lead the department in implementing the set tasks (Senior Manager R).

Why didn’t the HODs themselves generally perceive a need to learn how to make strategic plans? One reason may be strategic planning is not their central task area. In practice, the HODs enjoy a very low level of autonomy. Therefore, they do not really need to bother leading the department to achieve desired goals and objectives. They may still fulfil their job by completing concrete tasks assigned by the university. Thus, they may not see any need to learn strategic planning skills.

In further discussion with some participants, it was revealed that while the HODs are supposed to make an operational plan from the university plan, some often assign all tasks to the Deputy HODs or the Heads of Academic Groups. This in another reason they may not see any needs to improve their planning skills. This may indicate that the university is not able to always manage what the HODs actually do. In responding to this training need, the university probably should consider implementing more comprehensive performance management of the HODs.
4.2.5.4. **Personal capability – almost no training is needed.**

The majority of participants agreed that the HODs possess the necessary personal attributes; however, a very small number said that the HODs still need to train themselves for ethical and professional qualities. These qualities will help create personal credibility for the HODs, thereby making them a more effective leader.

4.2.5.5. **A summary and critical comment**

The most critical training needs for the HODs are related to generic and role specific competencies. Specifically, to perform at the desired level, the HODs need to study generic management knowledge and skills, learn the roles of the HODs, learn English, learn research methods and practice doing research, and improve specialised expertise. In terms of interpersonal capability, they need to acquire the principles of effective communication and improve their communication skills. With regards to cognitive capability, the greatest need is to learn how to articulate a vision and plan strategically and operationally. The HODs’ personal capability seems to be adequate for the present context.

Compared to the training needs of HODs identified by Aziz et al. (2005) and Wolverton et al. (2005), the HODs’ training needs in this case study are more competencies-centred. The most critical training needs are to improve generic management and role specific competencies. Training in cognitive capability was identified as a need not by the HODs but by the other groups of informants. The HODs’ personal capability appears to be satisfactory.

4.2.6. **The reasons for the training needs**

The previous section reveals the critical training needs of the HODs. In other words, there were considerable gaps between the HODs’ current and expected competencies and capacities. To narrow these gaps, finding the reasons behind them is important. During interviews, the participants were asked to identify the causes. Twelve informants laid the blame on the university’s rapid development. Four informants complained that poor university policies caused the gaps. Four respondents blamed a
lack of prior management training. No time for learning (4 informants) and poor personal commitment to learning (3 informants) were also identified as reasons for the gaps.

University’s rapid development

The university’s rapid development was the major reason for the gaps between the desired and actual knowledge and practice of the HODs. HaUI was originally a vocational training school. It was upgraded into a university only 6 years after becoming a college. One participant made a very interesting comment that the HODs had to run before they knew how to walk. When the university gained a new status, the HODs were selected not because they were qualified but because no one else at the university could do the job better. Such fast development made it very difficult for the HODs to catch up with the new work demands.

Poor university wide policies

Poor national and institutional policies were also another cause for the gaps. One senior manager claimed that because the university neither had any regulations that required the HODs to engage in staff development nor were the desired qualities of the HODs clearly spelt out. Another senior manager laid the blame for the gaps on the uncompetitive working environment in higher education in Vietnam generally, and at HaUI particularly. In addition, the low level of autonomy might also prevent the HODs from performing to the best of their ability.

A lack of management training

Poor selection methods and lack of management training might have also contributed to deficiencies in the HODs’ performance.

*We normally select a HOD from Deputy Heads or Heads of Academic Group who hasn’t learnt anything about management. The selected HOD then often work by anecdotal experience and habits and therefore is very likely to fail to meet work requirements (Senior Manager S).*
I think it is due to the universal situation in Vietnam. I have never known of any training courses organised for HODs by any institutions. I don't know whether such courses exist but nothing has been organized up to now (HOD E).

No time for learning and low personal commitment

No time for learning also stopped the HODs from acquiring all the desired qualities. Two HODs complained that they couldn’t devote wholeheartedly to their job because they had to earn money from outside sources to support their family. Consequently, they had no time for professional development, although they thought that it was necessary. This fact is very relevant in a low-income country like Vietnam. Some senior manager also complained that working conditions for the HODs including remuneration were poor. Consequently, the HODs’ work commitment was rather low and they could not devote their efforts entirely to their work.

A summary on the reasons for the HODs’ performance gaps

In short, both objective and subjective factors caused the HODs’ performance gaps. Firstly, due to the university’s rapid growth, their current level of knowledge and skills are inadequate. Secondly, their performance deficiencies are caused by the university inadequate policies regarding human resources management. Consequently, they can neither spend time for learning nor commit entirely to work. Lastly, a lack of professional training in management is another reason for the perceptions of the HODs’ not entirely adequate performance.

4.2.7. How to enhance the HODs’ performance

It is believed that people all support what they help create. At the end of the interview, the participants were asked to present some solutions to improve the performance of the HODs. The informants were all very open and enthusiastic in providing their answers. They identified three main approaches to solve this problem: improving university policies, increasing personal commitment from the HODs, and providing training.
Improving university policies

Improving university policies were the most popular suggestion given by the informants (14 sources). These ideas are summarised in table 8:

Table 8: A summary of participants’ suggestions on improving university policies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Specific content</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>Selection should be based on a standardization of skills for the HODs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There should have a policy on talent attraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There should be succession planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>The HODs should be provided with more resources, e.g. facilities and administrative assistants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The HODs should be given time and money for their own professional development, e.g. participating in workshops, conferences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Payment for the HODs should be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>The HODs should be delegated more authorities for decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>There should be regulations to make the HODs do their own professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>The HODs’ performance should be professionally managed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>management</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 shows that all suggestions are related to human resource management regarding improving university policies in order to narrow the gaps between the desired and actual HODs’ performance. Before selecting a HOD, there should be a standardization of knowledge and skills for the HODs. Because all the HODs were selected from within, one senior manager suggested that a policy on talent attraction should be in place. Since departments at HaUI are very thinly staffed, particularly in administration, some suggested that the HODs should be provided with more administrative assistants. This can provide them with more time to focus on the ‘big’ picture.
The participants also recommended that more financial resources should be invested in payment for the HODs and for their professional development activities. Lastly, the HODs’ performance should be systematically evaluated. In essence, these suggestions are very similar to best practices in current human resources management. The university should consider them and take proper actions.

**Increasing personal commitment to learning**

Apart from improving the university policies, the participants also recommended higher level of personal commitment from the HODs. In order to narrow their performance gaps, it must be the HODs who improve themselves. In stressing the HODs’ role in narrowing the performance gaps, one senior manager said: ‘first of all, the HODs have to try their best. If they don’t, no one can narrow their gaps’ (Senior Manager R). Some participants explained further that in the current challenging situation of Vietnam in general, and of the university in particular, there is a lack of resources including time for the HODs to learn. Thus, the HODs have to make their own time to develop the required skills and knowledge.

In order to increase the HODs’ commitment to learning, it was also suggested that ‘both top university leaders and the HODs must be aware of the need to learn to cope with the present situation as well as to prepare well ahead’ (Senior Manager S). It has been argued that people will not change if their own lives are not challenged, first of all, the HODs must be aware of their need. It was interesting that one HOD even talked about the need to do research similar to this case study to improve people’s awareness of the necessity for management training and development. In short, increasing the HODs’ personal commitment to learning may be the key for improving their performance.

**Providing training in management and leadership**

In order to improve the HODs’ performance, the informants strongly recommended training. A lack of training in management and leadership was identified as a major cause of the HODs’ performance gaps.
There must be training about any issues that haven’t been trained previously and training must be carried out immediately (Deputy HOD M).

There should be short courses for the HODs to learn about management. The university has recently created positive conditions; however, more favourable conditions must be provided continuously (Senior Manager U).

There must be a development plan for every job. If people are going to be selected to take management roles, training prior to taking the roles must be provided (HOD D).

How can the training and education needs of middle – level academic managers be better addressed?

The last question asked in the interview was which forms of learning should be provided for the HODs. This question was asked to reveal the most desired learning types so that a relevant training program can be provided to meet the HODs’ needs. Most participants expressed a preference for formal, short term, and locally provided leadership development programs, preferably custom-tailored to role-specific needs, followed by having ad hoc conversations about work with other HODs either outside or inside the university, and finally undertaking site visits to local and overseas institutions or agencies.

At least there should be a formal short course about the HODs’ responsibilities, then visits to ‘typical’ higher education institutions in combination with informal conversations with people of similar roles (HOD D).

It was interesting to find that each of the three most preferred types of learning in the case study well aligns with one of the three approaches to academic leadership development & learning presented by Scott et al. (2008). Formal short courses go well with formal leadership development category. Site visits match practice-based learning, and ad hoc conversations fit in self-managed learning. The finding indicates that a combination of different approaches should be considered in developing a management development program for academic leaders in general and for the HODs in the case study particularly.
Another notable observation was that formal learning was more preferred. Informal coaching/mentoring, identified as an effective method that helps to develop leadership capability (Scott et al., 2008), was not mentioned. From the personal experience, the researcher realised that such informal learning is not very popular in Vietnam. In order to diversify the learning experience and to utilise available resources, more informal learning activities should be included in professional development.

The researcher also deliberately asked the participants’ perceptions of sending the HODs to an advanced overseas country for training, considering the fact that Vietnam is a less developed country. The finding shows that overseas training was only supported by about one-thirds of the informants. The main reasons for not recommending overseas training were budget constraints and language barriers. If the university really wants to advance their organizational capacity, these problems should be given sufficient attention.

In summary, providing training is a crucial way to respond to the HODs’ training needs. However, to enhance the overall performance of the HODs, the university should also reconsider its human resources management policies and the HODs themselves should realise the importance of professional learning to improve their capacity.
5. CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

The overall aim of this research is to advance an understanding of the training needs of the HODs at a newly established university in Vietnam. The specific research questions are:

1) What are the roles of the HODs at a newly established university in Vietnam?

2) What are the desired qualities of the HODs at a newly established university in Vietnam?

3) What are the gaps between the current and the desired qualities of the HODs (the training needs) at a newly established university in Vietnam?

4) Why do the HODs’ performance gaps exist?

5) How can the HODs’ performance be enhanced?

This section will revisit the research questions above, summarise the findings of this research work and offer conclusions based on the findings. First of all, each research question is revisited by comparing the case study’s findings against those in the literature. Secondly, recommendations are discussed on the basis of the findings in terms of how to enhance the HODs’ performance. Finally, suggestions will be made on how this research work can be progressed.
5.2. Research objectives: Summary of Findings and Conclusions

5.2.1. Research question 1: What are the roles of the HODs at a newly established university in Vietnam?

The literature review found six generic groups of duties of middle-level academic managers: department governance, program management, human resource management, budget and resources, external communication, and office management. However, in practice, as evidenced in the case study, the scope and depth of these duties vary. At HaUI, the main task areas of the HODs seemed to centre on program management, academic staff management, and facilities management. The neglected areas are strategic management, budget management, external relationship management, personal academic development, and management of students and administrative staff.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this research on the roles of middle-level academic managers at universities is that a lack of a clear role definition is at the heart of much of the HODs’ inefficiencies, job dissatisfaction and low quality of overall management. In addition, a low level of autonomy and a more management than a leadership role may discourage risk-taking and stifle creativity and long term vision articulation from the HODs. Therefore, to make the job more efficient and effective for the HODs, a redefinition of role may be needed.

5.2.2. Research question 2: What are the desired qualities of the HODs at a newly established university in Vietnam?

The literature review identified various desired qualities of effective middle-level academic leaders. Scott et al.’s (2008) academic leadership capability framework, which includes five capabilities dimensions, seems to be the most comprehensive to date. Two dimensions of competencies are generic and role specific. Three dimensions of capabilities are personal, interpersonal, and cognitive. Although there is no agreed list of qualities in the literature, the specific qualities deemed as important and necessary for academic leaders in more developed contexts tend to be more capabilities-oriented. In other words, they are more about responsiveness, creativity, contingent thinking and growth in relatively uncertain circumstances.
The case study supports findings from the ‘western’ studies in the literature review that a wide range of qualities are required for today’s middle level academic managers. All five capability domains in Scot et al.’s (2008) framework were nominally identified. However, the HODs’ desired qualities appear to be more ‘competencies – biased’. The most critical attributes are a strong academic credential, excellent generic management skills, a wide range of general knowledge, and great internal relationships and external networks.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that the qualities that are expected of middle-level academic leaders are context-based. Middle-level academic leaders’ desired qualities of the HODs as perceived by stakeholders are strongly linked to the roles they perform. In the western contexts, middle-level academic managers seem to increasingly play a leading role. Therefore, their desired qualities seem to be ‘capabilities’ focused. In contrast, the HODs’ roles at HaUI seem to be mainly operational or administrative with a central focus on teaching activities. Thus, the criteria of HODs’ effectiveness relate directly to academic credentials and organizational capabilities. In short, leadership is situated.

5.2.3. Research question 3: What are the training needs of the HODs at a newly established university in Vietnam?

Only two studies in the literature review of this research focused on the training needs for the HODs at two universities in the United States. Wonerton et al. (2005) found three generic groups of training needs for HODs: conceptual understanding, skill development, and reflective practice. Aziz et al. (2005) identified four most significant areas requiring training: budgets and funding, faculty issues, legal issues, and professional development of chairs. These sets of training needs are different from those of the case study.

In terms of Scot et al. (2008) framework, the training needs of the HODs in the case study come from all 5 capability domains. Five of the eight specific needs are in generic and role specific competencies. They are the need to study generic management knowledge and skills, to learn the roles of the HODs, to improve
specialised expertise, to learn English, and to learn research methods and practice doing research. With regards to interpersonal capability, the HODs have a need to improve their communication skills. The need to learn planning skills relates to cognitive capability. Finally, the HODs need to self-educate for moral and professional qualities – a need related to personal capability; however, the perception of this need is weak.

The conclusion that can be made on the training needs of the HODs is that training needs of the HODs are competencies-biased and context-based. They are totally based on the HODs’ specific roles, the set of qualities desired of them from stakeholders, and their current knowledge and practice.

5.2.4. Research question 4: Why do the HODs’ performance gaps exist?

The study found five main reasons for the HODs’ performance gaps: the university’s rapid development, poor university policies, a lack of prior management training, no time for professional learning, and poor personal commitment to learning. The conclusion from this finding is that the HODs’ current inadequate knowledge and practice compared to the desired level is not the only factor impacting their performance. Their working environment and various external forces do have a significant influence as well.

5.2.5. Research question 5: How can the HODs’ performance be enhanced?

The participants suggested three main approaches to narrow the HODs’ performance gaps: improving university policies, increasing personal commitment from the HODs, and providing training. The lesson from this part of the research is that although training is a powerful solution to improve the HODs’ performance, it is not the only answer. In closing the HODs’ performance gaps, university policies, especially human resource ones, should also be improved.
How can the training needs of the HODs be better addressed?

Scott et al. (2008) suggest that professional learning should be an action learning cycle which involves an ongoing process of identifying the ‘gaps’ between one’s present capabilities and the desired leadership capability elements and filling the gaps by combining self-managed leaning with practice-based learning, and formal leadership development. Similarly, in the case study, most participants expressed a preference for a combination of formal short term local leadership development programs, preferably custom-tailored to role-specific needs, followed by having ad hoc conversations about work with other HODs either outside or inside the university, and finally undertaking site visits to local and overseas institutions or agencies.

The conclusion from this finding is that a combination of different approaches should be considered in developing a management development program for the HODs and that professional learning should be an ongoing process.

5.2.6. An overall unexpected conclusion

There is an overall unexpected conclusion that this research work has uncovered. That is the HODs’ performances are influenced significantly by both subjective and objective factors. By identifying the gaps between their current management knowledge and practice with their desired ones, the case study discovered not only the HODs’ training needs but also a number of the organizations’ structural and human resources problems. How effectively the HODs work not only depends on how competent and capable they are but also on whether their roles are clearly defined, their work procedures are standardised and whether a number of appropriate human resources policies are implemented. These issues must be paid sufficient attention and dealt with properly if the university wish to develop the performance of its HODs.
Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations

5.3. Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The first recommendation to be made is that HaUI should redefine the roles of the HODs with a view to making the HODs’ job clear and giving the HODs ‘more room to lead’.

This recommendation would have a number of benefits. Firstly, the HODs themselves would understand more clearly what they are supposed to be doing, and there would be consistency in the roles performed by all of the HODs. Secondly, a clear definition of roles and standardization of skills would form the basis for a comprehensive performance assessment of the HODs. Finally, decentralization of power to the HODs may allow HaUI to develop a group of middle-level academic managers who will not only be able to follow top leaders’ directions but also be capable of operating strategically.

2. Another recommendation of the study is that to enhance the HODs’ performance, apart from identifying their training needs and providing training programs, the university should reconsider the relevance of its policies, especially those relating to human resources management. A great deal of attention should be put on improving recruitment and selection, performance management, professional development of the HODs, and as stated, empowering the HODs and providing them with sufficient resources.

This recommendation would have a number of advantages. For example, a policy on hiring the right HODs would help the university standardise the HODs’ skills and knowledge. Investing more in the HODs may improve their commitment to work and thereby their quality of work can be improved as well. If the HODs are provided with more administrative assistants, this can free up time for the HOD to spend on developing department long term plans and on research and publication. This strategy has been used successfully by the Australian HODs, according to Wolverton (1999). In a nutshell, relevant human sources policies and practices should be able to maintain a good fit between the university’s development needs and the HODs’ hierarchy of needs, such as career development, thereby enhancing the HODs’ performance significantly.
3. Finally, it is recommended that in designing a training program for the HODs at HaUI, the training program should be based on the needs identified in this study. The HODs need to be trained immediately in generic management skills and role specific duties. In addition, interpersonal skills and cognitive skills also require improvement. In selecting training forms, a combination of self-managed learning, practise-based learning, and formal learning should be employed. Professional learning for the HODs should be considered as an ongoing process.

This recommendation would be strategic to HaUI development. Firstly, by responding to the HODs’ training needs, the university could send a clear signal to its stakeholders that the management actually trusts people. In addition, by providing effective training for the HODs, the university can develop an excellent group of middle-level academic managers. These people would not only have technical knowledge but also possess excellent managerial and leadership skills. Once becoming more professional academic leaders, this critical mass would be able to implement critical changes that could enable HaUI not only to catch up with other well-established universities in Vietnam and worldwide but also to achieve long term sustainable development.

5.4. **Suggestions for future research**

Although thorough research has been conducted for this project, there are other related areas of study that could benefit this work on professional development for middle-level academic managers, for example:

1. Further research could focus on examining criteria for leadership effectiveness of middle-level academic managers, particularly in developing countries. These criteria would be helpful in developing and assessing middle-level academic managers. They would also help in designing more effective professional development programs.

2. Future research should be replicated in other Vietnamese universities, taking into account age and type of institution. More in-depth case studies would be helpful in incrementally adding to the rich tapestry of research on training needs of middle-level academic managers in general, and in Vietnam in particular.
Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations

3. It would be interesting to compare the role of HODs in Vietnam with those in other Asian contexts such as China, Thailand, etc (a similar comparative research by Wolverton et al. (1999a) compared HOD tasks in Australia and the United States). The similarities and differences in HODs’ tasks from such comparative studies would help universities learn how to make the HODs’ work most satisfying and effective.
REFERENCES


APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1: ETHICAL ISSUES

There are a number of key ethical issues that need to be addressed in this research project:

1. **Justification of the research**: as demonstrated in the context and rationale of the study.

2. **Obtaining University of Melbourne Ethics Approval**: the researcher obtained Ethics Clearance from The University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

3. **Obtaining informed consent**
   - From HaUI (see Appendix 2)
   - From all participants (already obtained)

4. **Confidentiality**
   - The confidentiality of the information provided by participants will be safeguarded subject to any legal limitations
   - All data will be stored in a secure place for 5 years from the date of thesis submission.

5. **Data disposal**
   - Confidential data and records will be destroyed by the most effective methods. Those in paper format will be shredded. Those in electronic format will be reformatted or rewritten. A ‘magnetic field bulk eraser’ will be used to degauss the audio tapes (i.e., remove the recording).

6. **Risks to subjects**
   - No physical, psychological, social or legal high risks have been found

7. **Anonymity**
   - Participants will not be identified in any publication arising from the research
APPENDIX 2: HAUÍ’S PERMISSION FOR CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH PROJECT

28th April 2008

To Whom It May Concern
Gui tôi: ca nhan/to chuc co lien quan

This is to confirm that Ms Nguyen Thi Lan Huong is given permission by Hanoi University of Industry in Vietnam to conduct a research on identifying the training needs of department heads at the university.

Please contact me on + 84 913239730 or email to hvdien@hauí.edu.vn if you require any further information.

Lá thư này xác nhận chị Nguyễn Thị Lan Hương đã được trường Đại học Công nghiệp Hà nội, Việt nam đồng ý cho thực hiện nghiên cứu đề tài “Xác định nhu cầu đào tạo của trường khoa” tại nhà trường.

Nếu quý vị cần làm rõ bất cứ yêu cầu nào hãy liên hệ với tôi theo số điện thoại + 84 913239730 hoặc email hvdien@hauí.edu.vn.

Hoang Van Dien,
Rector,
Hanoi University of Industry

Hanoi University of Industry
Km 13 Minh Khai – Tu Liem – Hanoi – Vietnam
T: +84 4 7655391 F: +84 4 7655261 W: www.hauí.edu.vn
Dear Sir/Madam,

I am Nguyen Thi Lan Huong. I am taking a Master of Education (Educational Management) course at Melbourne Graduate School of Education, the University of Melbourne. As part of my course, I am doing a minor thesis titled ‘Identifying the training needs of HODs at a newly established university in Vietnam’. This research project is conducted under the supervision of Professor Vincent Lynn Meek, Director of L H Martin Institute of Higher Education Leadership and Management at Melbourne Graduate School of Education, the University of Melbourne.

As you may know, management and leadership play a very important role in higher education. I believe that good management makes good schools. However, I also understand how hard it is to take a leadership role in a highly academic environment. Therefore, I am very interested in how educational leaders in higher education want to be prepared and supported so that they can get their job done effectively.

Being a HOD of a university which has just evolved from a college, you might be facing a number of challenges. There might be different dimensions in management and leadership knowledge and skills that you may want to be equipped with. I would really want to hear your opinions about these issues. Hopefully, we will together make contributions to the design and development of education programs for university academic HODs.

If you would like to contribute to my research, I would like you to take part in an individual interview. The interview will last from 45 minutes to 1 hour at the time of your choice. The interview will be audio-recorded so that it can be translated into English. In the interview, you will be asked the following broad questions:

- What do you perceive as an ‘ideal’ HOD?
- What do you think you will need to do in order to be the ‘ideal’ HOD?
- Why do you think you may lack certain points to be the ‘ideal’ HOD?
- What should be done to fill the gaps?
I should make it very clear to you that participation in the research is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the research and withdraw any unprocessed data at any time.

One of the important things that researchers must do is to think about protecting the privacy and well-being of the participants. I want to make sure that anything you say in the interview will be kept confidential. If I use anything you say in my research I can use another name for you, or I will try to write in such a way that it may be difficult for people to figure out who you are.

The data will be kept securely in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, the University of Melbourne for five years from the date of publication, before being destroyed.

This research will lead to the production of a Masters thesis. If you decide to be a contributor, a copy of the research findings will be forwarded to you, if you agree to this.

If you would like to participate, please indicate that you have read and understood this information by signing the accompanying consent form and returning it in the envelope provided. The researchers will then contact you to arrange a mutually convenient time for you to conduct the interview.

Should you require any further information, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact either my supervisor Professor Vincent Lynn Meek: +61 3 8344 0756 or me Huong: + 61 411309305. Should you have any concerns about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, on ph: 8344 2073, or fax: 9347 6739.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Vincent Lynn Meek

Ms. Huong Nguyen Thi Lan
APPENDIX 4: A TEMPLATE OF CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

Name of participant: .............................................................

Name of investigator(s): Professor Vincent Lynn Meek, Huong Nguyen Thi Lan

1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written plain language statement to keep.

2. I understand that my participation will involve an interview and I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the plain language statement.

3. I acknowledge that:

(a) the possible effects of participating in the interview have been explained to my satisfaction;

(b) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data I have provided;

(c) The project is for the purpose of research;

(d) I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements;

(e) I have been informed that with my consent the interview will be audio-taped and I understand that audio-tapes will be stored at University of Melbourne and will be destroyed after five years;

(f) My name will be referred to by a pseudonym in any publications arising from the research;

(g) I have been informed that a copy of the research findings will be forwarded to me, should I agree to this.

I consent to this interview being audio-taped

   yes    no (please tick)

I wish to receive a copy of the summary project report on research findings

   yes    no (please tick)

Signature            Date

(Participant)
APPENDIX 5: GUIDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

A) For the HODs

1. How long have you been a HOD? What is the size and composition of your Department?

2. Could you tell me briefly about the history and development of your department?

3. How did you learn to be a HOD?
   - Peer mentoring from other heads.
   - Formal management training, e.g. MBA.
   - In-house staff development management training.
   - Merely thrown in at the deep end.

4. What responsibilities do you have as a HOD?

5. How important is it for you as HOD to play an active role external to the faculty and university?
   - do you represent your faculty on national/international disciplinary boards
   - are you a member of a national/international committee/association of HODs in your disciplinary/professional area
   - do you regularly engage in external revenue raising activities
   - do you regard yourself as a faculty and/or university entrepreneur

6. In terms of an average working week, what proportion of your time would you allocate to the following activities?
   - university wide committee meetings
   - faculty based committee meetings
   - external activities (please specify)
   - personnel issues
- student matters (eg dealing with student complaints)
- personal teaching and research

7. Has being a HOD substantially changed your academic/professional orientation with respect to
   - Teaching (eg how many hrs of teaching/HDR supervision per week do you do)
   - Research (eg how many externally funded research projects are you the principal investigator; how many refereed articles have you published in the last 12 months)
   - Have you become a full-time manager, and if so, how do you feel about this

8. Are you adequately supported in your role as HOD by administrative support staff, particularly with regard to financial matters and personnel management?

9. What are the three or four most enjoyable aspects of being a HOD?

10. What are the three or four most difficult aspects of being a HOD?

11. What makes a HOD best perform his/her job?

12. What knowledge, skills and abilities do you think an ‘ideal’ HOD should have?
   - In program management
   - In staff management
   - In student management
   - In budget and resources management
   - In internal communication
   - In external relationships
   - In professional development
   - In research management
13. Do you need to improve yourself to become an ‘ideal’ HOD? Why? Why not?
14. What knowledge, skills and abilities you may need to have to do your job ideally?
15. How do you feel about the gaps between your desired and current knowledge, skills and abilities?
16. Why are there these gaps?
17. What should be done to help close these gaps?
18. Why did you want to become a HOD; what attracted you to the position?
   - how long do you plan staying in the position
   - upon giving up the HOD role, what position will you take up (prompt: return to normal academic life or advance in the central administration/executive)

B) For the Deputy HODs

1. How long have you been a Deputy HOD?
2. How did you learn to be a Deputy HOD?
   - Peer mentoring from other heads.
   - Formal management training, e.g. MBA.
   - In-house staff development management training.
   - Merely thrown in at the deep end.
3. How long have you been working with your present HOD? How would you describe your relationship with the HOD?
4. What responsibilities does a HOD have?
5. What makes a HOD best perform his/her job?
6. What knowledge, skills and abilities do you think an ‘ideal’ HOD should have?
   - In program management
- In staff management
- In student management
- In budget and resources management
- In internal communication
- In external relationships
- In professional development
- In research management

7. Does your HOD need to improve himself/herself to become an ‘ideal’ HOD? Why? Why not?

8. What knowledge, skills and abilities does s/he may need to have to do his/her job ideally?

9. How do you feel about the gaps between the desired and current knowledge, skills and abilities?

10. Why are there these gaps?

11. What should be done to help close these gaps?

C) For the Boards of Rectors

1. How long have you been the Rector/Vice Rector?

2. How did you learn to be a Rector/Vice Rector?

   - Peer mentoring from other heads.
   - Formal management training, e.g. MBA.
   - In-house staff development management training.
   - Merely thrown in at the deep end.

3. What position did you take before the present post?

4. Which HODs are you supervising now?

5. What responsibilities does a HOD have? Are these specified in writing?
6. What makes a HOD best perform his/her job?

7. What knowledge, skills and abilities do you think an ‘ideal’ HOD should have?
   - In program management
   - In staff management
   - In student management
   - In budget and resources management
   - In internal communication
   - In external relationships
   - In professional development
   - In research management

8. Does your HOD need to improve himself/herself to become an ‘ideal’ HOD? Why? Why not?

9. What knowledge, skills and abilities does s/he may need to have to do his/her job ideally?

10. How do you feel about the gaps between the desired and current knowledge, skills and abilities?

11. Why are there these gaps?

12. What should be done to help close these gaps?

**D) For the Human Resources and Training Administration Manager**

1. How long have you been HR/Training administration manager?

2. How did you learn to be a HR/Training administration manager?
   - Peer mentoring from other heads.
   - Formal management training, e.g. MBA.
   - In-house staff development management training.
   - Merely thrown in at the deep end.
3. What position did you take before the present post?

4. What is your role regarding working with HODs?

5. What responsibilities does a HOD have? Are these clearly specified in writing?

6. What makes a HOD best perform his/her job?

7. What knowledge, skills and abilities do you think an ‘ideal’ HOD should have?
   - In program management
   - In staff management
   - In student management
   - In budget and resources management
   - In internal communication
   - In external relationships
   - In professional development
   - In research management

8. Does the HODs need to improve himself/herself to become an ‘ideal’ HOD? Why? Why not?

9. What knowledge, skills and abilities does s/he may need to have to do their job ideally?

10. How do you feel about the gaps between the desired and current knowledge, skills and abilities?

11. Why are there these gaps?

12. What should be done to help close these gaps?
Author/s: 
Nguyen, Huong Thi Lan

Title: 
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Date: 
2009

Citation: 

Persistent Link: 
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/35438

File Description: 
Identifying the training needs of the heads of departments at a newly established university in Vietnam

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