

## DEVELOPING LEADERS AND MANAGER'S ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGERIAL COMPETENCES IN VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITIES

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### Abstract

*In recent years, university administration has attracted considerable attention from theoretical and practice researchers since it plays decisive roles in school competitive advantage enhancement in globally challenging and competitive educational environments. Therefore, there is a high demand for professionals with new skills and competencies and high-quality leaders and managers in the context of globalization and international integration. Previous studies focused on developing skills and competences of teaching staff, evaluating teaching performance, and improving professional competences. Research on developing administrative and managerial competences for university leaders and managers, especially in Mekong Delta region was rare. Therefore, this study aims to (1) evaluate the measures and the performance of educating and training activities and (2) propose some potential solutions for developing university administrative and managerial competences for leaders and managers in public universities in Mekong Delta. The study employed a non-experimental mix research method (qualitative and quantitative) using a survey questionnaire. The survey samples included 110 leaders and managers in six Vietnamese public universities in Mekong Delta. The study outcomes are expected to provide decision-makers a general framework for cultivating university administrative and managerial competences among leaders and managers in Vietnamese public universities.*

**Keywords:** *Administrative and managerial skills and competences, high-quality leaders and managers, Mekong Delta region of Vietnam solutions to university administration development, university administration.*

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# PHÁT TRIỂN NĂNG LỰC QUẢN LÝ VÀ QUẢN TRỊ ĐẠI HỌC CHO ĐỘI NGŨ LÃNH ĐẠO VÀ QUẢN LÝ Ở CÁC TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC VIỆT NAM

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## Tóm tắt

Trong những năm gần đây, quản trị đại học đã thu hút sự quan tâm đáng kể cả về mặt lý luận và thực tiễn. Quản trị đại học đóng vai trò quyết định trong việc phát triển lợi thế cạnh tranh của nhà trường trong môi trường giáo dục cạnh tranh toàn cầu. Do vậy, việc phát triển các kỹ năng quản lý và năng lực quản trị đại học trong bối cảnh quốc tế hóa và hợp tác toàn cầu cho đội ngũ quản lý là cần thiết. Các nghiên cứu trước đây chủ trọng vào việc đề xuất các giải pháp phát triển kỹ năng và năng lực giảng dạy, năng lực chuyên môn và đánh giá hiệu suất giảng dạy. Các đề xuất về phát triển năng lực quản lý và quản trị đại học cho đội ngũ quản lý ở các trường đại học Việt Nam, đặc biệt là ở vùng Đồng bằng sông Cửu Long còn bỏ ngỏ. Do đó, nghiên cứu này đề xuất một số giải pháp phát triển kỹ năng quản lý và năng lực quản trị đại học cho đội ngũ lãnh đạo và quản lý ở các trường đại học công lập trong vùng Đồng bằng sông Cửu Long trên cơ sở khảo sát thực trạng các biện pháp và tính hiệu quả của hoạt động giáo dục và đào tạo ở các trường này. Nghiên cứu sử dụng phương pháp định tính và định lượng bằng bảng câu hỏi khảo sát. Mẫu khảo sát bao gồm 110 lãnh đạo trường và cán bộ quản lý tại 6 trường đại học công lập trong vùng Đồng bằng sông Cửu Long. Kết quả từ nghiên cứu này được kỳ vọng sẽ cung cấp cho những người ra quyết định ở các trường đại học một khuôn khổ chung trong việc bồi dưỡng kỹ năng quản lý và năng lực quản trị đại học cho đội ngũ lãnh đạo và quản lý tại các trường đại học công lập ở Việt Nam.

**Từ khóa:** Đội ngũ lãnh đạo và quản lý trình độ cao, giải pháp phát triển năng lực quản trị đại học, kỹ năng quản lý và năng lực quản trị đại học, quản trị đại học, vùng Đồng bằng sông Cửu Long.

## 1. Introduction

University is a place which wins admiration of the young by its celebrity, kinds, and affections. It is a seat of wisdom and a light of the world. It is a place where inquiry is pushed forward from mind to mind and knowledge with knowledge. Therefore, there is very high demand for better heads, leaders, and managers to operate universities sufficiently and effectively.

One of the crucial components in university management is administrators and managers. University administration means administration in university. It includes all administrative bodies and persons, such as presidents and administrative staffs acting on behalf of the president and/or the board of trustees (Law Insider). Administrative competences related to planning, organizing, directing, and controlling (Yossef & Rakha, 2017), while administrative skills include decision-making, conceptual, leading skills (Bahiraei et al., 2012). Administrative skills and competences of school leaders are decisive factors for administrative creativity and change innovation creation and for success or failure of a university.

University success is often relied on managerial performance and techniques (Naquin & Holton, 2006; Susanti & Gistituati, 2020). Managerial competences include management competences of all levels in universities, such as academic, finance, student affairs, planning, information systems, and quality assurance. The quality of leadership and management can have direct impact on the university staff and long-term achievement of universities (Yossef & Rakha, 2017; Naquin & Holton, 2006; Susanti & Gistituati, 2020).

Vietnamese universities have recently faced a complex and challenging environment since the national market in education is becoming more competitive. International investment, a decrease in the population of potential students, and the growing of numerous small institutions add to this complexity. Thus, high-quality and skillful leaders and managers have been in high demands. They are policy makers and considered drivers towards achievements.

University administration has recently attracted considerable attention from theoretical and practice researchers since it plays decisive roles in school competitive advantage enhancement in globally challenging and competitive educational environments.

Therefore, there is a high demand for professionals with new skills and competencies and high-quality leaders and managers in the context of globalization and international integration. However, previous studies focused on developing skills and competences of teaching staff (Leal Filho et al., 2021; Gian & Bao, 2021), online teaching skills and competences (Albrahim, 2020), evaluating teaching performance (Chen et al., 2015; Thanassoulis et al., 2017), improving professional competences (Catto, 2003; Celik, 2011; Supriyanto et al., 2019), improving information technology skills (Catto, 2003), and improving digital technology skills (Morze & Glazunova, 2019; Morze & Buinytska, 2019). Research on developing administrative and managerial competences for university leaders and managers, especially in Mekong Delta region was rare. Therefore, this study aims to (1) evaluate the measures and the performance of educating and training activities and (2) propose some potential solutions for developing university administrative and managerial competences for leaders and managers in public universities in Mekong Delta. Potential solutions for addressing the challenges and for developing university administrative and managerial skills and competences were also provided.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Research procedure

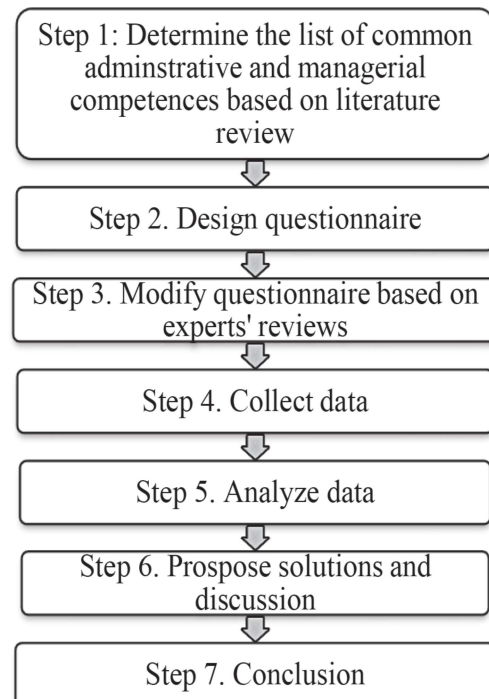


Fig. 1. Research procedure

Fig.1 graphically describes the research procedure of this study. The procedure contains seven steps: determining the list of common administrative and managerial competences based on literature review, designing questionnaires, modifying questionnaires after experts' reviews, collecting data, analyzing data, proposing solutions and discussing these proposed solutions, and drawing conclusions.

## 2.2. Participants

The present study used objective sampling method. It means that the selected samples were in the manner to respond the questionnaire properly. Those, who refused participating and responding, were not included in our study. The total number of 110 participants for analysis were university presidents, rectors, vice-rectors, deans, and associate deans of academic faculties. They are currently working at six public universities in Mekong Delta region of Vietnam: Can Tho University (56 years old), An Giang University (23 years old), Dong Thap University (20 years old), Tra Vinh University (16 years old), Kien Giang University (6 years old), and Bac Lieu University (16 years old).

The participants were separated into two groups of samples. Sample 1 included 28 university leaders: six presidents, six rectors (5.5%), and 16 vice-rectors (15%). Sample 2 consisted of 40 deans (36%), and 42 associate deans (38%) of academic faculties. Fig. 2 graphically describes the survey samples in each position. They have gained 5-15 years of leading and directing experience. In addition, all respondents had graduate degrees (i.e. doctor and master) from well-known Vietnamese and foreign universities and institutions. The dataset was collected during the academic year 2020-2021.

The purposes and procedure of the study were clarified to the participants, and their permission was obtained. Respondents' identities will not be disclosed for ethical reasons. The confidentiality of the collected information was maintained.

The participants were asked about the current situation and action plans to develop university administrative and managerial competences for leaders and managers (frequency), the content and methods of education and training activities, and their

assessments of these education and training activities in their workplaces.

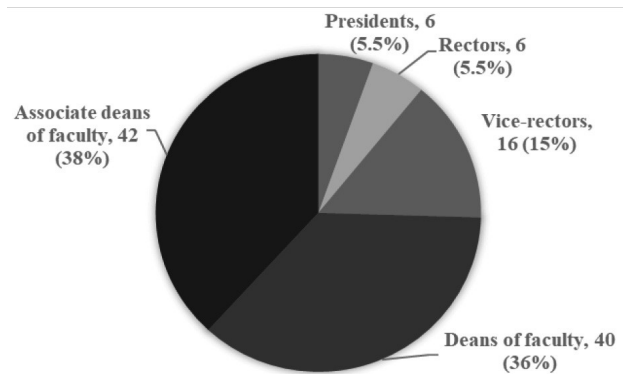


Fig. 2. The number of survey samples in each position

## 2.3. Data collection and data analysis

The study employed a non-experimental mix research method (qualitative and quantitative) using two 5-point Likert scale questionnaires. The scales and items in this survey had been previously applied from our project "Developing university administrative competences for leaders and managers in universities in Mekong Delta" (No. B2019.SPD.06) and reached the final decision by five experts in the concerned domain. The estimated time for participants to complete the survey was ten minutes. The questionnaire was delivered in-person to two groups of samples.

Questionnaire 1, scaling from 1 point "Never" to 5 points "Very often" (as seen in Table 1), was used for evaluating the frequency of education and training activities. The questionnaire included four variables: "planning", "contents of education and training activities", "methods of education and training activities", and "assessment".

Questionnaire 2, scaling from 1 point "Very poor" to 5 points "Excellent" (as seen in Table 1), was used for participants' assessments on these education and training activities.

The research data were processed through several steps: data tabulation, indicating the average scores, and determining the criteria. Data descriptions were carried out by calculating the average score for each survey item. The corresponding scores and their intervals of attribute usage are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Scores and criteria of classification for different intervals of attribute usage**

Attribute Usage	Score	Criteria of classification	
		Questionnaire 1	Questionnaire 2
85%-100%	5	Very often	Excellent
60%-84%	4	Often	Very good
40%-59%	3	Average	Good
11%-39%	2	Sometimes	Average
0%-10%	1	Never	Poor and very poor

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. The current context and action plans to develop university administrative and managerial competences for leaders and managers

Out of 110 participants, 55 (50%) respondents indicated that universities often implement the education and training activities for developing university administrative and managerial skills and

competences for leaders and managers; 45 (41%) responders reported that the schools sometimes or even never implement these training activities. A total of 108 respondents reported that the “Often” and “Very often” frequency of the education and training activities was low (40.1%). It can be concluded that these education and training activities are not considered major tasks among universities.

**Table 2. Results of frequency of education and training activities among six universities**

Variables	Frequency	Attribute usage	Criteria
Building plans for education and training activities (Proposed action plans)	78.5	78.5%	Often
Implementing the proposed action plans	47.5	47.5%	Average
Contents of the education and training activities	65	65%	Often
Methods of the education and training activities	52.6	52.6%	Average
Evaluating the performance of education and training activities	31.8	31.8%	Sometimes

**Table 3. Scores and criteria of classification for different intervals of attribute usage**

Variables	Frequency	Attribute usage	Criteria
Building plans for education and training activities (Proposed action plans)	72.5	72.5%	Very good
Implementing the proposed action plans	80	80%	Good
Contents of the education and training activities	65	65%	Good
Methods of the education and training activities	57.5	57.5%	Good
Evaluating the performance of education and training activities	15	15%	Poor and very poor

#### 3.2. The assessments on the education and training activities

Table 3 summarizes the results participants' assessments on the education and training activities. The feedback and evaluation on training and education performance from trainees were almost ignored (n=89, 80.9%). So the criteria for the variable

“Evaluating the performance of education and training activities” is at poor and very poor level. It can be concluded that universities have not had general and strategic measures for developing administrative and managerial skills for school leaders and managers. The available training and education activities were insufficient, not well-prepared, and un-assessed.



#### 4. Proposing measures for developing university administrative and managerial competences for leaders and managers

##### 4.1. Evaluation and training framework of administrative and managerial skills

##### and competences

Table 4 lists our proposed framework for training and evaluating administrative and managerial competences for leaders and managers in Vietnamese public universities.

**Table 4. Evaluation and training framework of administrative and managerial competences**

No.	Evaluation and training framework of administrative and managerial competences	Scales
1	Ability to adjust the university's mission, vision and strategic goals into component strategies and concrete action plans	1-5
2	Ability to plan and make decisions about the policies and directions of the university's activities in the areas of human resources, academic institutions and finance	1-5
3	Ability to decentralize the authority to advise and exercise authority within the university	1-5
4	Ability to establish relationships of interest and responsibility within the university and between the university and its stakeholders	1-5
5	Ability to create and develop the university's core values and brand	1-5
6	Ability to monitor and evaluate the implementation of university goals (short, medium and long term)	1-5
7	Competence in organization management and human resource management	1-5
8	Ability to manage financial budget effectively	1-5
9	Ability to consult and implement management and operate document systems	1-5
10	Ability to establish a degree of autonomy tied to organizational and individual accountability.	1-5

*Note: Excellent = 5, Very good = 4, Good = 3, Average = 2, Poor = 1*

##### 4.2. Standardizing the governance management and university administration document

It is vital to define governance goals and principles of decentralization in the implementation of university governance clearly. The most important management document is the standard rules and regulations for directing and operating the university. These rules and regulations should include finance, organization, expertise, academia, and democracy issues since they can be considered drivers of institutions to achieve school corporate objectives, vision, and mission. University's units will be promptly advised and will implement their tasks effectively in accordance with the rules and regulations.

##### 4.3. Promoting decentralization and accountability of management staff in all activities of the school

It is necessary to determine the responsibilities and powers of administrative officers corresponding to their positions and roles in performing the work of administrative officers of the management subjects in the university. Accordingly, at each level

of management, it is essential to specify the roles of the managers in the performance of tasks and powers since they ran the administrative services as managers or policy makers. Basically, their role is to give advice and often do so through the pre-meeting of the chairman of the committee. Such advice is mainly about precedent and the official interpretation of university rules and regulations.

##### 4.4. Organizing training and fostering university administration capacity for management staff in the university

On the basis of the strategic orientation of university development and the planning on development of the management staff and the capacity framework mentioned above, higher education institutions need to pay attention to training, educating and fostering leaders and managers' administration capacity under the following principles: (1) ensure the structure of the team; (2) consistent with the content and program; (3) the training plan must be regularly and continuously improved; (5) pay attention to inspection, assessment, preliminary and final evaluation of training and retraining.

## 5. Conclusions

The outcomes of this study are expected to provide decision makers a general framework for cultivating university administrative and managerial competences among leaders and managers in Vietnamese public universities. This study also recommends that universities should conduct various kinds of training to improve the ability of administration and leadership in for schools' sustainable development.

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