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Solutions to Improve the Knowledge Absorption Capacity of Lecturers at Universities in Vietnam

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Abstract:

The objective of this study is to provide recommended solutions to improve the knowledge absorption capacity of lecturers in universities in Vietnam. The study uses the method of synthesizing knowledge and analyzing secondary documents to make recommendations and solutions to improve the knowledge absorption capacity of students in universities in Vietnam.

Keywords: Knowledge absorption capacity, Vietnam

1. Introduction

In the context of digital transformation, globalization and the rapid development of knowledge today, universities in Vietnam are facing an urgent requirement to improve the quality of training and scientific research. Lecturers – who play a central role in the education process – need to constantly update, adapt and transform new knowledge to teach effectively, and at the same time contribute to the sustainable development of the school and society. The ability to absorb knowledge, to understand in a general way, is the ability to receive, analyze, process and apply new knowledge, which is one of the core competencies that need to be focused on developing for the teaching staff.

However, in many universities in Vietnam today, the capacity of lecturers to absorb knowledge is still limited due to many reasons such as lack of motivation to learn, the academic environment does not really encourage innovation, or there is no mechanism to support the effective updating and application of knowledge. Meanwhile, in-depth research on this issue is still quite modest, especially practical studies, proposing feasible solutions for the context of higher education in Vietnam.

Therefore, the implementation of research to synthesize theoretical and practical knowledge, analyze secondary documents to make recommendations and solutions to improve the capacity of knowledge absorption for lecturers is very necessary and meaningful both theoretically and practically. The research results not only contribute to perfecting the theoretical system related to the capacity to absorb knowledge in the field of higher education, but also provide an important scientific basis for education managers and universities to develop policies and strategies for the development of lecturers in the direction of integration and innovation.

2. Literature review

The concept of Absorptive Capacity (AC) originated in the field of knowledge management and innovation in enterprises, first defined by Cohen and Levinthal (1990) as "the ability of an organization to recognize the value of new information from the external environment, absorb it and apply it for commercial purposes." Since then,

this concept has been expanded and applied to many different contexts, including higher education – where knowledge is not only imparted but also needs to be reinvented and disseminated.

In the context of modern higher education, lecturers are not only lecturers but also play the role of researchers, innovators and knowledge connectors. Therefore, **the ability of lecturers to absorb knowledge** becomes an important factor determining teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and the ability to adapt to new trends such as digital transformation, internationalization of education, and liberal education (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Marginson, 2016).

The study by Zahra and George (2002) classified absorption capacity into two main groups: potential absorptive capacity and realized absorption capacity, which includes components such as perception, acquisition, metabolism, and exploitation of knowledge. This model has been applied by many scholars to assess academic capacity in educational institutions, especially in improving professional capacity and innovating teaching methods (Roberts et al., 2012; Kim & Lee, 2015).

In Vietnam, research on knowledge absorption capacity in the higher education environment is still relatively limited, mainly focusing on teaching capacity, scientific research, or approaching from the perspective of human resource management in universities (Nguyen & Pham, 2020; Tran & Do, 2022). Several recent studies have begun to approach absorption capacity as an individual learning competency in organizations, which is closely linked to learning motivation, work environment, organizational commitment, and support from leaders (Nguyen & Le, 2023; Phan, 2024).

In addition, the factors that promote knowledge acquisition capacity are also widely discussed, including: intrinsic learning motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000), organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991), lifelong learning ability, critical thinking ability, and self-learning capacity (Candy, 2002). In the context that Vietnam's higher education is gradually integrating and innovating, the study of these factors is not only academic but also has profound practical application value.

In conclusion, previous studies have provided a rich theoretical foundation for analyzing and evaluating the knowledge absorption capacity of lecturers. However, there is still a lack of systematic and integrated research from many secondary sources to propose specific solutions for the Vietnamese context. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the aforementioned academic gap, and at the same time make feasible recommendations to improve the quality of university lecturers in the transition period.

3. The current situation of knowledge absorption of lecturers at universities in Vietnam

According to the Vietnam Higher Education Statistics Yearbook for the academic year 2022–2023 published by the Ministry of Education and Training, the country currently has about 72,000 university lecturers, of which: Doctoral degrees account for about 28.3%, a slight increase compared to the previous academic year (26.7%). Master's degrees account for about 65%, mainly in non-public and local schools. Undergraduate qualifications (mainly teaching assistants or young lecturers who have not yet completed postgraduate studies) account for about 6–7%. Although the percentage of lecturers with postgraduate degrees is gradually increasing, it is still low compared to the strategic goal of Vietnam's higher education development to 2030, which sets a target of at least 35-40% of lecturers with doctoral degrees. In particular, the level differentiation between key universities and local and non-public schools is still quite large. For example, national universities, regional universities, and key specialized schools typically have a doctoral faculty ratio of 45–60%. Meanwhile, in many non-public schools and colleges upgraded to universities, the percentage of doctoral lecturers is only 5-15%.

Regarding the status of job transfers and resignations, a report from the Department of Organization and Personnel – Ministry of Education and Training (2023) said: In the period 2020–2023, about 2,000–2,500 university lecturers quit or transfer jobs each year, accounting for 2.5–3.5% of the total number of lecturers per year. This situation is common in non-public universities, newly established schools, or schools that lack policies to support professional development. The main reasons include: (1) income is not competitive compared to private enterprises; (2) the working environment has little innovation, lack of research

opportunities; (3) administrative pressure and lack of support for personal capacity development. In particular, the phenomenon of "brain drain" is on the rise, when a part of well-qualified lecturers (especially young doctors, with foreign degrees) leave the public education system to join the private sector, international organizations or start their own education businesses. This poses a great challenge in retaining and developing a team of lecturers with high knowledge absorption capacity, thereby directly affecting the quality of training and scientific research.

Table 1: Preliminary statistics on lecturers in Vietnam

Quota	Value (2022–2023)
Total number of university lecturers	~72.000
Percentage of PhDs	~28.3%
Percentage of Master's Degree	~65%
Number of Leave/Job Changes Annually	2.000–2.500
Annual Turnover Rate	2,5–3,5%
Doctoral rate in key universities	45–60%
Percentage of PhDs in non-public schools	5–15%

In the context that higher education in Vietnam is gradually integrating with the region and the world, the requirement to comprehensively innovate programs, teaching methods and scientific research has become increasingly urgent. However, one of the outstanding challenges today is the limited capacity of the lecturers – who play a central role in the process of university innovation and development.

According to a survey by the Ministry of Education and Training (2022), although about 75% of university lecturers currently have a postgraduate degree, the capacity to update and apply new knowledge in teaching and research is still limited. Specifically, only about 40% of lecturers regularly participate in training courses, academic seminars, or update professional knowledge from international sources. The majority of lecturers still rely mainly on traditional textbooks and have little access to advanced research works, especially at local universities, non-public universities or schools that lack the resources to invest in academic development.

Some of the main causes pointed out include:

- *Lack of lifelong learning motivation: Many lecturers do not have a strong enough intrinsic motivation to actively improve their knowledge, especially in the context of increasing administrative, teaching, and research pressures (Nguyen & Pham, 2020).*
- *Limitations in foreign language and information technology skills: This is a barrier that makes it difficult for lecturers to access global knowledge, especially international academic databases (Tran, 2021).*
- *The academic environment is not really encouraging innovation: Many universities still operate under an administratively model, not creating conditions for lecturers to develop their personal capabilities, especially in independent scientific research or international cooperation (Le & Dang, 2023).*
- *Lack of support mechanisms and policies for professional development: Professional retraining and fostering programs have not really been invested in a methodical, scattered and lack of connection with the practical needs of lecturers.*

In addition, the uneven development between university blocks (public – private, central – local) also creates a gap in qualifications and access to knowledge between groups of lecturers. National key universities have much better access to international knowledge and academics than local or newly established universities.

However, it should also be noted that in recent years, a part of young, highly qualified and foreign-trained lecturers have shown a very good capacity to absorb knowledge, acting as the nucleus of innovation in universities. They actively participate in research, international publications and apply new knowledge to teaching, creating a positive spillover influence in the academic community.

In summary, the knowledge absorption capacity of university lecturers in Vietnam is currently at an average level, with a clear differentiation by region and type of school, and is greatly influenced by many factors such as personal motivation, organizational environment, technological skill level and policies to support professional development. From that situation, the development of solutions to promote the capacity of lecturers to absorb knowledge is an urgent requirement, contributing to improving the quality of higher education and promoting the sustainable development of the national education system.

4. Recommendations to universities to improve the capacity of lecturers to absorb knowledge

In the context of the deep integration that is taking place globally, through the rapid development of science and technology, countries are striving to promote and build a "knowledge society" where knowledge will become a prerequisite to promote a civilized economy. develop and improve the quality of life of people and avoid lagging behind the rest of the world. Our Party and State in the "Socio-economic Development Strategy for the 2011-2020 period" have emphasized that one of the strategic breakthroughs is: "To rapidly develop human resources, especially high-quality human resources, focusing on fundamentally and comprehensively renewing national education; closely associate the development of human resources with the development and application of science and technology." Thus, people are a vital factor for development and the center of all goals, in order to train a team of high-quality human resources, we need to have a "knowledge education". Education is the key to knowledge, especially higher education levels such as universities. In order to achieve the goal of building a "knowledge society" in the near future, it is extremely necessary to improve the capacity of university lecturers to transform and apply knowledge to practice as a sharer and guide in the higher education system. Based on the theoretical models and research results obtained, I would like to make some recommendations for universities in Vietnam

Firstly, building a dynamic and open working and research environment

According to the results of the study in chapter 4, job satisfaction has a positive impact on organizational commitment. When lecturers feel satisfied with the work they are doing, they will have more confidence and motivation to continue to stick and collaborate with the school for a long time. Thus, if universities build a positive and dynamic working environment – where lecturers feel they have the opportunity to explore, absorb new knowledge and share personal knowledge in a multilateral knowledge network between lecturers and colleagues, students and departments, research departments, and businesses thereby developing their own capacity, of course, the satisfaction of the lecturers with their work will increase a lot. An environment that promotes the ability to absorb knowledge, transform and share it not only helps lecturers have the opportunity to connect, improve and cultivate knowledge for themselves, but now it has even become an important competitive factor of universities in the context that enrollment attraction is becoming a dilemma for teachers higher education. In order to create a working environment that is capable of increasing the satisfaction of faculty and thereby building a strong bond, universities need to:

+ Support to increase confidence and trust in the professional ability of the lecturer system

Belief in one's own professional competence is one of the important factors in motivating individuals to accumulate, exploit and apply knowledge. Therefore, the role of the university in creating policies, learning projects, research seminars so that lecturers have the opportunity to absorb and discuss new knowledge, and be commented on teaching expertise is extremely necessary. Especially in the context of the global outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, leading to social distancing for nearly three years, during this period, the contact between lecturers and other subjects such as students, colleagues and partners is limited, etc concentrated research also faces many difficulties; Universities should build an online learning network, connect multilaterally to help

their lecturers continue to study, research, and absorb new professional knowledge without any obstacles. The development of science and technology has helped to erase all limitations of time and space; Through the application of advanced technologies, connecting and creating an international environment where lecturers can exchange and absorb knowledge from all over the world is also a method to help increase confidence in their own abilities. When lecturers have the opportunity to talk, exchange internationally, and make objective comments on professional knowledge, they will feel more confident in their own capacity, thereby further promoting the learning and research of each individual.

+ Increase job satisfaction through organizational commitment and fairness

In the context of many fluctuations in Vietnam's education sector, the increasing number of universities and the trend of studying abroad in developed countries is blooming, universities need to create special competitive advantages for themselves to maintain their position. In particular, the system of highly professional lecturers, ready to stick and dedicate to the work will be a proactive advantage. In order to retain and attract high-quality lecturers, it is inevitable to build a more positive teaching environment both materially and spiritually. Establishing a good remuneration mechanism with commitments to support both financially such as salaries and bonuses as well as learning opportunities, support for participation in training courses, professional research, and domestic and foreign seminars are effective solutions that universities should apply. The remuneration regime has not created motivation to work, but it cannot affect the attitude, learning motivation and working spirit of lecturers. In addition, commitments to foster talents, retain students with excellent academic results to continue to stick with the school in the future should also be considered. In addition to competitive working remuneration, fairness also needs to be promoted, the leadership of universities should put into application policies to recognize and promote the contributions of individuals in research and creativity and have a clear reward and punishment regulation in the system. Lecturers who have made many contributions, actively participated in learning and absorbing knowledge need to be rewarded, encouraged and facilitated more. The division of work according to expertise and position also needs to be handled scientifically and appropriately. These measures help lecturers realize the value and effort of themselves and their colleagues are properly recognized, evaluated objectively and fairly, thereby feeling that they have more opportunities for promotion, more stable jobs and improved learning motivation. In another aspect is recruitment activities, the majority of universities have been autonomous in recruitment, the requirements and recruitment process are posted publicly and transparently on the university's information system; ensure fairness and publicity, limit bias and dishonesty to the maximum. Although not mentioned in the research paper, recruitment practice factors have a positive impact on the knowledge acquisition process of lecturers (especially public universities in the Hanoi area) according to Do Van's research paper on factors affecting knowledge sharing of lecturers at public universities in Hanoi Sang (2020). This result also coincides with the results of research on the relationship between human resource management and knowledge sharing of organizational members (Chee Yang Fong et al., 2011; Sanz-Valle and Jimenez-Jimenez, 2013), showing that the practice of human resource recruitment is a factor worth paying attention to. These will be positive improvements for lecturers who value honesty and fairness in the absorption and sharing of knowledge.

According to the results obtained from chapter 4 of this research paper, work experience has a regulating effect from satisfaction, organizational commitment, learning motivation to knowledge absorption capacity. Accordingly, for lecturers who have a lot of experience, seniority, have accumulated a relative amount of knowledge, can exploit and apply knowledge in practice quickly, job satisfaction is the most important factor to help promote, improve the capacity to absorb knowledge. Therefore, for lecturers with a lot of experience, universities need to focus on increasing job satisfaction. On the other hand, for lecturers with little experience or new to school, the factor they are most interested in is the opportunity and motivation to learn to improve their professional capacity and meet increasingly strict requirements in the context of global educational integration. For experienced lecturers, universities are still limited, so they should prioritize creating opportunities, promoting motivation for learning, research and exploration in this group of lecturers. In terms of organizational commitment, the impact of this factor on all lecturers is the same, commitments on opportunities as well as

remuneration need to be maintained and improved over time to a reasonable degree to increase satisfaction and attachment between lecturers and work units. In terms of gender, according to the results of the study, there was no difference between men and women in improving their ability to absorb knowledge, so the satisfaction, motivation to learn, and attachment of both subjects need to be paid attention to and improved.

+ *Improve spiritual life, positivity in relationships with colleagues and students*

Spiritual life is always an upholding factor in work and life, in order to improve and promote a more positive working relationship between lecturers and colleagues as well as students, thereby increasing satisfaction and cohesion with the working environment, the school can apply the following policies

(1) Create opportunities for direct and open dialogue for lecturers through direct methods such as collective, social, movement, etc. or through an available information technology platform. This will be an opportunity to help lecturers have the opportunity to learn and connect with each other more, remove rigid boundaries between superiors and subordinates, between lecturers of one major and lecturers of other specialties, thereby promoting the desire to learn, apply and share knowledge with each other among lecturers.

(2) Establish a network of learning, research and knowledge sharing such as scientific conferences, international forums, professional research,... creating a premise for lecturers to absorb, research and apply knowledge widely. The large participation of the lecturer system is related to research issues, students in the major will promote joint work; listen and share each other's views frankly; contribute and build a rich amount of knowledge; is the bond not only between lecturers but also between teachers and students. Scientific works and seminars are often attended and sponsored by businesses, which is also an opportunity for lecturers to develop their professional capacity.

(3) Promote and encourage the contribution of lecturers based on an open and transparent contribution mechanism.

Secondly, the school needs to build favorable conditions for lecturers in improving the capacity of lecturers to absorb knowledge

In order to improve the capacity of lecturers to absorb knowledge, a number of overall conditions need to be focused on promoting, including:

+ *Technical technology and facility platform*: The trend of digitizing information and management activities, applying work programs, and sharing knowledge online is growing strongly in the world, the education industry in general and Vietnam's higher education in general are also not out of this inevitable trend. Therefore, in order to improve the role of the digital platform in creating a learning environment and absorbing knowledge, the school's information system needs to be designed and built reasonably, easy to use and highly transparent, able to fully display information, knowledge on the school's homepage as well as other media. A good online teaching platform also needs to be established to meet the needs of exchange, sharing, and improving the interest in learning and teaching of lecturers. In addition to online teaching and exchange channels, the system of fixed facilities also needs to be fully prepared because face-to-face interaction is still the most effective way to share and absorb knowledge, and at the same time help increase the capacity to connect. Therefore, teaching support equipment such as projectors, computers, multi-purpose classrooms of specific disciplines, etc. need to be provided and supplemented in a timely manner.

+ *Building a knowledge network that connects generations of lecturers*: Each generation of lecturers has their own advantages and disadvantages, so there is a connection and mutual support to promote all the strengths in teaching and knowledge acquisition. Lecturers who have extensive experience in working, teaching and teaching possess a wide range of knowledge and in-depth teaching and communication methods, but lack flexibility and adaptation to the innovation of science and technology, the internet, digital platforms, etc online teaching. Meanwhile, the dynamism and ability to apply high technology are the strengths of the young generation of lecturers. Therefore, it is necessary to have an environment that connects generations of lecturers to support and share knowledge and motivate each other to learn. The school can use traditional elements and

cultural identities of the school, faculty, and major to carry out activities to connect and absorb knowledge effectively.

+ *Ensuring access to information and intellectual property rights*: In order to promote the motivation of learning and research, available resources and reference knowledge play a significant role, in order to access official knowledge sources, the school needs to create conditions to build a system of research papers, theses, and textbooks, which can be accessed for research and reference. At the same time, it still ensures to maintain copyright for creators. A transparent and easily accessible knowledge sharing system between departments, disciplines, domestic universities and universities in Vietnam and the world will be an infinite source of knowledge, creating a significant motivation for the research process. improve their expertise.

+ *Building an academic environment to create a favorable environment for lecturers to develop their professional qualifications*: The university should build a dynamic academic environment, maximize support for research and improve the professional qualifications of lecturers. Through the organization of academic clubs and professional activities by specialty, participating members have the opportunity to share and discuss research works of individuals, colleagues or studies with great influence in the industry. This will promote research motivation, motivation to learn, acquire new knowledge and help remove limitations in research activities. In addition, in order to improve the quality of absorbed knowledge and methods of transforming and applying knowledge into practice appropriately; it is necessary to have cooperation and mutual support between different instruction groups and science clubs instead of individual activities; Scientific research guidance groups also play an advisory role to help lecturers increase their professional confidence in research, especially for young lecturers who are still inexperienced. Foreign Trade University is one of the leading factors in policy promulgation, promoting the establishment of spearhead research, moving towards high-quality research works. In addition, exchange programs between the university and universities, international units, and leading research experts both at home and abroad are extremely necessary. To do this, the units of the university and lecturers need to actively seek and contact prestigious international seminars and programs, and at the same time create urgent projects to attract the attention and cooperation of donors, research both domestically and internationally.

+ *Financial support to help lecturers feel secure in researching and absorbing new knowledge in the community*: Lecturers need a lot of support and help from the university in providing financial support for research purposes, participating in international seminars abroad, going to find out the reality - professional work that requires strong financial capacity. In addition, the construction and development of projects, professional boards, and concentrated research institutes also need support and help from the university's budget.

Third, the University needs to encourage and strengthen the learning motivation of lecturers through the culture of the organization

According to Pemberton and Stonehouse (1999), in order to build a positive learning environment, organizational culture needs to foster an environment where knowledge and learning are highly valued. Whether an individual is motivated and interested in learning depends partly on the learning environment of the organization they are working in. A good organizational culture means a good process of cooperation, working together and organizing learning, which is the premise for the process of communicating and acquiring knowledge to take place effectively. The learning process of the individual is promoted through the exchange of knowledge information, encouragement, open discussion and debate of knowledge. Therefore, schools need to build a cultural context that both stimulates and promotes the learning dynamics of each lecturer. The process of research and knowledge acquisition is carried out through a series of activities including: learning (participating in professional training, specialization, higher level training), group activities, research (participating in scientific research, writing newspapers, publishing research, seminars, conversations, etc ...). Universities often have a significant history of formation and operation, each school even each discipline and each faculty in the university also has its own learning culture. This is a very good environment to encourage lecturers to cooperate and emulate learning from each other within the faculty, school and increasingly expanding. At the

same time, they participate in research, training, fostering, and improving their expertise, thereby applying and improving new knowledge to work and teaching.

In addition, the commitment to support in terms of facilities and finance from the school mentioned above is also an important factor in promoting the ability of lecturers to absorb knowledge through the intermediary factor of learning motivation.

5. Conclusion

The ability to absorb knowledge is a matter of concern in the context that Vietnam's education is more practical to suit the country's profound changes. The ability to absorb knowledge is considered an important factor in assessing the quality of lecturers in the context of Vietnamese education, which is undergoing a transformation, focusing on applicability. Knowledge absorption capacity is also considered a powerful catalyst to help develop creative capacity and work efficiency in organizations. Improving the capacity to absorb knowledge is to improve the learning culture, the sustainable cohesion between lecturers and the school.

The ability of university lecturers to absorb knowledge is a key factor determining the quality of teaching, research effectiveness as well as the ability to adapt and innovate in the context of higher education changing strongly under the impact of globalization. digital transformation and requirements for training high-quality human resources. Through synthesizing the theoretical basis and analyzing secondary documents related to the current situation of lecturers in universities in Vietnam, this study has clarified the factors affecting the ability of lecturers to absorb knowledge, and at the same time pointed out the existing barriers to qualifications, learning motivation, academic environment and professional support mechanism.

Statistics show that although the level of lecturers is improving, the percentage of PhDs is still low compared to the strategic target, and the turnover/transfer of lecturers continues to be a major challenge for the higher education system. The differentiation in knowledge absorption capacity between school groups and between individuals also shows the need for flexible solutions, suitable for the conditions of each training institution.

On the basis of analysis and research, we propose groups of recommended solutions to improve the capacity of lecturers to absorb knowledge, including: (1) enhancing lifelong learning motivation through improving evaluation and remuneration mechanisms; (2) building an academic environment that encourages research, innovation and knowledge sharing; (3) improve the foreign language ability and digital capacity of lecturers to easily access international knowledge; and (4) develop professional training programs that are personalized and linked to the development needs of lecturers.

The research results not only contribute academically when clarifying the elements and conditions affecting the capacity to absorb knowledge in higher education, but also have practical significance in formulating policies for the development of lecturers, contributing to improving the quality of training and international integration of Vietnamese universities in new era.

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