

MANAGING YOUNG FACULTY IN UNIVERSITIES IN DISADVANTAGED AREAS: A PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

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Abstract: *The article analyzes the current situation and proposes solutions for managing young faculty at disadvantaged universities in Vietnam from an educational perspective. The study shows that although the proportion of young faculty is relatively high (30-40%), there is still a high rate of personnel fluctuation, with resignation and job transfers at 10-15%/year, which directly affects the quality of training and research. By synthesizing documents and analyzing data from national reports and international organizations, the article emphasizes the role of building a positive academic environment, establishing a personalized career path, developing an academic mentor network, and flexible decentralization and multi-stakeholder cooperation in improving the effectiveness of attracting, retaining, and developing young faculty. These solutions not only help stabilize the staff but also promote the sustainable development of higher education in disadvantaged areas. This article also suggests a strategic approach for higher education managers in the context of digital transformation and increasingly deep international integration.*

Keywords: *disadvantaged areas, higher education, human resource management, team development, young faculty*

I. Introduction

In the context of digital transformation and international educational integration, Vietnamese higher education is facing the need for comprehensive innovation, in which young faculty play a key role. However, in universities in disadvantaged areas, attracting and retaining young faculty faces many challenges: low income, limited academic environment, and few career development opportunities. The annual turnover rate fluctuates between 10-15% (TopDev, 2025a; VCCI, 2025a), resulting in a shortage of high-quality human resources and affecting the quality of training. In

this situation, the problem is not only recruitment but also effective management for the sustainable development of this team. Pedagogical approaches help clarify the role of creative subjects in lecturers' work, thereby proposing solutions to intrinsic motivation, career support, the working environment, and appropriate policy mechanisms. The study focuses on analyzing the current situation, identifying limitations, and proposing solutions to develop young faculty at universities in disadvantaged areas, thereby improving the quality of human resources and promoting equality in education.

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II. Literature review and theoretical framework

2.1. Concept of young faculty and disadvantaged areas

According to the Law on Higher Education (amended in 2018) and the regulations of the Ministry of Education and Training, young faculty are often defined as those under 40 years old, new to the profession, or with less than 10 years of teaching experience. Meanwhile, universities in disadvantaged areas are mainly concentrated in mountainous, border, and island areas, where socio-economic conditions are slow to develop, and facilities and high-quality human resources are lacking.

2.2. Pedagogical approaches in human resource management

From a pedagogical perspective, academic human resource management goes beyond traditional personnel management, focusing on nurturing faculty development through education-centered strategies. This approach emphasizes equipping young faculty with professional competencies, nurturing intrinsic motivation, and building a learning-centered academic environment.

The main theoretical foundations include:

Competency-based human resource management: This model prioritizes linking individual competencies to organizational goals and providing targeted development opportunities (OECD, 2024b).

Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000): This theory emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in motivating educators, especially novice teachers.

Lifelong learning and professional development: According to UNESCO (2024a), this framework emphasizes the need for continuous skills upgrading and organizational support for learning progression.

Applying these theories in struggling universities can help transform rigid administrative systems into dynamic environments that recognize, reward, and empower young educators to thrive.

III. Research methods

This study applied the Desk Review method to synthesize existing knowledge and data on the management of young lecturers in disadvantaged universities. Unlike empirical research, desk review allows for extensive coverage of secondary data and theoretical sources, thereby enabling a comprehensive, multidimensional understanding of the research problem.

This method follows these steps:

Literature search: Relevant reports, peer-reviewed journal articles, and institutional policy papers from 2020-2025 were identified using keywords such as “young faculty,” “faculty development,” “difficult areas,” and “pedagogical human resource management.”

Screening and selection: Documents were filtered based on relevance to the Vietnamese context, academic reputation, and focus on human resource development in education.

Thematic Synthesis: Selected documents were coded into thematic areas, including policy environment, organizational challenges, motivation theory, and faculty development practices.

Cross-validation: Data points from international organizations (e.g., the World Bank, UNESCO, and ILO) are compared with Vietnamese national reports and research findings to assess applicability and identify gaps.

Primary sources include policy reports from the Ministry of Education and Training, regional assessments by the World Bank and ADB, UNESCO's framework on equity in higher education, and academic journal publications. These findings serve as the theoretical and empirical foundation for the proposed interventions.

IV. Research results and discussion

4.1. Current situation of young faculty at universities in disadvantaged areas

In Vietnam's higher education reform toward modernization and digital integration, young faculty under 40 are key to enhancing training quality and innovation. In disadvantaged areas, they serve not only as the core teaching force but also as a vital link to global academic trends amid limited local resources.

* Proportion and distribution of young teaching staff in universities in disadvantaged areas

According to the World Bank (2024a) report, the proportion of young faculty under 40 years old in disadvantaged universities ranges from 30% to 40%, with large differences between regions and types of universities. Some public universities in the Northern mountainous region and the Central Highlands have this rate below 30% due to limited recruitment and retention conditions, while some specialized universities in the North Central and Southwestern regions have a rate of nearly 45% thanks to applying more flexible mechanisms in attracting talent.

Although this rate can be considered positive in the context of a shortage of high-quality human resources, the stability of the young teaching staff is a worrying bottleneck. Data from the Ministry of Education and Training (2024b) shows that the rate of young faculty quitting, changing jobs, or refusing to continue teaching at universities in disadvantaged areas is 10-15% per year, higher than the national average of about 5-7%. This reflects the trend of professionals moving from disadvantaged areas to urban areas, where living conditions, academic opportunities, and income are better.

* Causes of instability of young teaching staff

Inadequate remuneration: The basic salaries of lecturers at public universities in disadvantaged areas remain low relative to regional income levels, and allowances and performance bonuses are also limited due to limited financial resources. According to a survey by TopDev (2025c), the income gap between young lecturers and private-sector employees can be 3-4 times as wide, making teaching less attractive to qualified graduates.

Limited opportunities for academic development: Young faculty often have difficulty accessing research topics, academic projects, or international conferences due to limited funding and weak collaboration networks. A report by McKinsey and Company (2023b) shows that only about 25% of young faculty in some universities in the Northwest and Central Highlands are satisfied with their career development path; meanwhile, less than 10% have participated in international scientific conferences, and less than 20% have the opportunity to chair or participate in university-level topics.

Lack of academic conditions and facilities: Library infrastructure, laboratories, and teaching equipment at many universities in disadvantaged areas do not meet the requirements for innovative teaching methods, especially in the context of digital education. Young faculty face challenges in applying active teaching, accessing global materials, and involving students in research.

Lack of collegial environment and academic connections: Some young faculty feel isolated in a work environment that lacks connectivity. Lack of academic interaction with colleagues of the same generation or major makes it difficult for them to learn, share experiences, and develop professional skills.

* Shortage of young faculty in key sectors

One of the serious problems is the shortage of young faculty in key training fields such as information technology, engineering, nursing, and medicine - fields with high demand both inside and outside of universities. The strong shift of young, professionally qualified human resources to the private sector, economic groups, and FDI enterprises has made it difficult for regional universities to recruit suitable lecturers. According to international assessments, a substantial proportion of vacancies in information technology and engineering at universities in disadvantaged areas remain difficult to fill, reflecting broader labor market trends in which over two-thirds of firms report challenges in recruiting staff with technical skills (UNESCO, 2023).

* Impact of current context on higher education in disadvantaged areas

The “brain drain” in the higher education sector in disadvantaged areas

not only reduces the quality of training in the short term but also has long-term consequences, creating a regional human resource imbalance and widening the gap in educational development between regions. According to the UNDP Vietnam report (2025a), the lack of mechanisms to retain and develop young talent in the higher education system is one of the causes of inequality in access to high-quality knowledge between urban students and students in disadvantaged areas.

The lack of young faculty - a force that adapts to technology and connects with international academics - makes it difficult for universities in disadvantaged areas to transform digitally, innovate programs, and improve output standards.

4.2. Assessment of the quality of young faculty in disadvantaged universities

While the number of young faculty in disadvantaged areas has received attention, their quality remains a core issue for the long-term sustainability of academia. Recent assessments by the Ministry of Education and Training (2024a) and the World Bank (2024c) have identified some limitations in the teaching capacity, research productivity, and career advancement of young faculty in remote educational institutions.

Many young lecturers have strong expertise but lack pedagogical training, mentoring, and research resources. According to the Ministry of Education and Training (2024b), less than 20% of young faculty have published internationally or led competitive research projects. These limitations hinder both professional development and institutional visibility.

Limited development opportunities and unclear career paths reduce career satisfaction and commitment among

young learners in remote areas. Work motivation and retention are negatively affected by limited income, outdated facilities, and poor institutional support. According to ADB (2025a), many young faculty members in disadvantaged areas experience professional isolation and report low satisfaction with their work environment.

4.3. Challenges in managing young faculty at universities in disadvantaged areas

First, the challenge of building and implementing policies to attract and retain young faculty.

While some localities have policies to support scientists working in disadvantaged areas, most current policies are not attractive enough or have not been effectively implemented at the grassroots level. The lack of flexibility in recruitment, contract signing, and appointment of scientific titles has made it difficult for many universities to compete with the business sector or universities in large urban areas. In particular, policies on postgraduate training and on scientific research support for young faculty remain formalistic and lack long-term orientation.

Second, the challenge of the leadership team's human resource management capacity at the faculty and institute levels.

In many universities in disadvantaged areas, middle-level management (deans/deputy deans, deans, department heads) lack experience in career orientation, performance evaluation, and building a professional working environment for young faculty. Without clear advising processes or effective mentoring, young faculty often lack support and motivation for professional growth.

Third, the challenge of building an engaging and sustainable academic environment.

Young faculty often expect to work in a modern academic environment, have access to international knowledge, participate in research, and be recognized for their abilities. However, in many universities in disadvantaged areas, the working environment remains administrative, lacks innovation, and has not created an academic ecosystem that encourages creativity. Lack of modern labs, external partnerships, and funding for international engagement remain common obstacles.

Fourth, challenges in managing the psychology and work motivation of young faculty.

Young faculty have different psychological characteristics compared to previous generations: they value individuality, seek recognition and rapid advancement, and are less accepting of traditional constraints. Managing young faculty using the old model (rigid, commanding, and lacking feedback) can easily lead to internal conflicts and reduce work motivation. Meanwhile, psychological support programs, career counseling, or building a positive organizational culture are still not popular in universities in disadvantaged areas.

4.4. Causes of shortcomings in the management of young teaching staff

To understand the nature of the shortcomings in the management of young faculty, it is necessary to approach them from the perspective of public policy, organizational capacity, and management culture. Below are the main groups of causes:

* Causes from the education policy system and resource allocation

Although Vietnam's policy on developing the teaching staff has made progress in terms of orientation (as outlined in the 2018 revised Law on Higher Education and guiding decrees), there remains a significant gap between policy design and implementation. In particular, there is no clear and long-term national strategy for developing young faculty, especially in disadvantaged areas. Budget allocation for scientific research, postgraduate lecturer training, and the construction of academic facilities remains biased toward large universities in big cities, leaving universities in disadvantaged areas at a persistent disadvantage.

* Causes from organizational model and university-level management capacity

Many universities in disadvantaged areas lack a clear long-term human resource development strategy. The recruitment, training, and evaluation plans for young faculty are still in place, but they lack alignment with the industry's development strategy and regional characteristics. In addition, some managers still maintain a "administrative management" mindset rather than "university governance", leading to conservatism and stagnation in supporting and developing young human resources. The shortage of professional human resources in universities is also an important cause.

* Causes from geographical, social and regional psychological conditions

Specific socio-geographical factors such as distance from the center, difficult traffic conditions, low living standards, and cultural differences strongly influence young faculty's decisions to stay long-

term. Some qualitative studies in Vietnam have shown that non-material factors - such as professional isolation, low motivation, and lack of inspirational senior role models - strongly influence young faculty members' decisions to leave or change jobs in disadvantaged areas (Witter, Bui, Shengalia, & Vujicic, 2011).

* Caused by generation gap and lack of understanding in management

Unmanaged generational differences in values, skills, and expectations may undermine collaboration and academic culture. Many leaders lack updated HR strategies, such as value-based leadership or personalized development.

4.5. Comparative insights

The situation of young lecturers at struggling universities in Vietnam reflects a broader global trend, though there are contextual differences.

Rates and growth trends: The rate of young faculty (under 40 years old) in disadvantaged areas of Vietnam is 30-40% (World Bank, 2024b), lower than in regional countries such as Thailand (52%) and Malaysia (47%), which have national faculty retention programs and research incentives (OECD, 2024b).

Comparing turnover rates: Vietnam's disadvantaged universities have annual turnover rates of 10-15% (MOET, 2024b), double the national average and significantly higher than the ASEAN benchmark of 6-8% (ILO, 2023b). This disparity reflects an imbalance between university offerings and young faculty's expectations.

Satisfaction and engagement: According to McKinsey and Company (2023a), only 25% of young Vietnamese faculty members at disadvantaged universities feel satisfied with their

career development prospects. In contrast, over 40% of young faculty in Indonesia and the Philippines benefit from mentoring and international research collaborations.

Infrastructure and resource gaps: UNESCO (2024b) notes that while global efforts are investing in digital libraries, virtual labs, and AI-based teaching platforms, Vietnamese universities in remote areas still face outdated infrastructure and limited connectivity. This gap seriously hinders the implementation of pedagogical innovation and the capacity building of lecturers.

These comparisons underscore the urgency of implementing locally appropriate and pedagogically oriented management strategies to retain and develop young faculty in Vietnam.

4.6. Lessons learned and proposed solutions to improve the effectiveness of managing young faculty at universities in disadvantaged areas

* Innovating human resource management thinking towards human development

Universities need to shift from the mindset of “administrative personnel management” to “strategic management of academic human resources”. Young faculty must be considered a strategic resource, the center of innovation and development of training quality. The development of recruitment, employment, evaluation, compensation, and development policies must be linked to a personalized career path, ensuring fairness, transparency, and long-term development orientation.

* Develop and implement specific support policies for young faculty

There is a need for specific policies at the university and provincial levels:

Initial support policy: support for public housing, attraction allowance, and financial incentives for lecturers with master’s and doctoral degrees who commit to long-term commitment.

Career development policy: priority for sending to graduate university, financial support for participating in seminars, scientific research, and international publications.

Reward and incentive policy: recognize the contributions of young faculty through the performance evaluation system and honors in academic events.

* Developing the capacity of faculty/department management teams in supporting young faculty

It is necessary to enhance training in human resource management, mentoring, and coaching for middle managers. Deans and department heads need to be trained in performance evaluation methods, academic consulting, research orientation, and supporting the development of soft skills among young faculty. The model of “academic consulting - career companionship” should be applied to create a bridge between young faculty and experienced lecturers.

* Strengthen the building of a positive academic environment and learning community

Universities need to invest in building a positive organizational culture that encourages creativity, learning, and professional exchange. Academic exchange and research activities should be strengthened. It is necessary to create conditions for young faculty to participate in domestic and foreign expert networks through international cooperation or joint academic programs.

* Applying technology in human resource management and development

Applying human resource management, performance assessment, and goal management (OKRs/KPIs) platforms will help improve the effectiveness of young lecturer management. In addition, exploiting online learning platforms, open-source repositories, and artificial intelligence tools will effectively support young faculty in teaching and research.

* Close coordination between university - locality - Ministry of Education and Training

It is necessary to form a three-party coordination mechanism: universities - localities - Ministry of Education and Training in building high-quality human resource policies for universities in disadvantaged areas. Universities play a proactive role in proposing policies; localities support infrastructure and funding; the Ministry of Education and Training guides strategies and allocates appropriate training and research budgets.

V. Conclusion and recommendations

Young faculty play a key role in improving the quality of training and research at universities in disadvantaged areas. However, high staff turnover (10-15%/year) is posing a major challenge to stability and sustainable development.

From a pedagogical perspective, the article affirms the need for a comprehensive approach to developing this team, combining remuneration policies, personalized career paths, a positive academic environment, and a professional support network. On that basis, the author recommends:

1. Perfecting policies to attract and retain young faculty, especially in difficult areas, through financial mechanisms, housing support, and advanced training.

2. Develop a personal career path, linked to competency assessment and long-term goals.

3. Build a positive academic culture that encourages learning, sharing expertise, and creativity.

4. Strengthen mentor network and academic links, domestically and internationally.

5. Promote decentralization and academic innovation, reduce administrative pressure, and increase autonomy.

6. Strengthen the connection between universities - state - enterprises to mobilize resources and career development opportunities.

Developing a team of young faculty should be considered a long-term strategy that contributes to improving the quality of university education and narrowing regional gaps.

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QUẢN LÝ ĐỘI NGŨ GIẢNG VIÊN TRẺ TRONG CÁC TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC VÙNG KHÓ KHĂN: TIẾP CẬN TỪ GÓC ĐỘ GIÁO DỤC HỌC

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Tóm tắt: Bài viết tập trung phân tích thực trạng và đề xuất giải pháp quản lý đội ngũ giảng viên trẻ trong các trường đại học vùng khó khăn ở Việt Nam dưới góc độ giáo dục học. Nghiên cứu chỉ ra rằng, mặc dù tỷ lệ giảng viên trẻ tương đối cao (30-40%), nhưng vẫn tồn tại tình trạng biến động nhân sự với tỷ lệ nghỉ việc và chuyển công tác ở mức 10-15%/năm, ảnh hưởng trực tiếp đến chất lượng đào tạo và nghiên cứu. Thông qua tổng hợp tài liệu và phân tích dữ liệu từ các báo cáo quốc gia và tổ chức quốc tế, bài viết nhấn mạnh vai trò của việc xây dựng môi trường học thuật tích cực, thiết lập lộ trình nghề nghiệp cá nhân hóa, phát triển mạng lưới mentor học thuật, phân quyền linh hoạt và hợp tác đa bên trong việc nâng cao hiệu quả thu hút, giữ chân và phát triển giảng viên trẻ. Các giải pháp này không chỉ góp phần ổn định đội ngũ nhân sự mà còn thúc đẩy phát triển bền vững giáo dục đại học vùng khó khăn. Bài viết đồng thời gợi mở hướng tiếp cận chiến lược cho các nhà quản lý giáo dục đại học trong bối cảnh chuyển đổi số và hội nhập quốc tế ngày càng sâu rộng.

Từ khóa: giảng viên trẻ, quản lý nhân lực, vùng khó khăn, giáo dục đại học, phát triển đội ngũ

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