TOWARD COMPLEXITY: HOW UNIVERSITIES DEVELOP RESEARCH CAPABILITIES
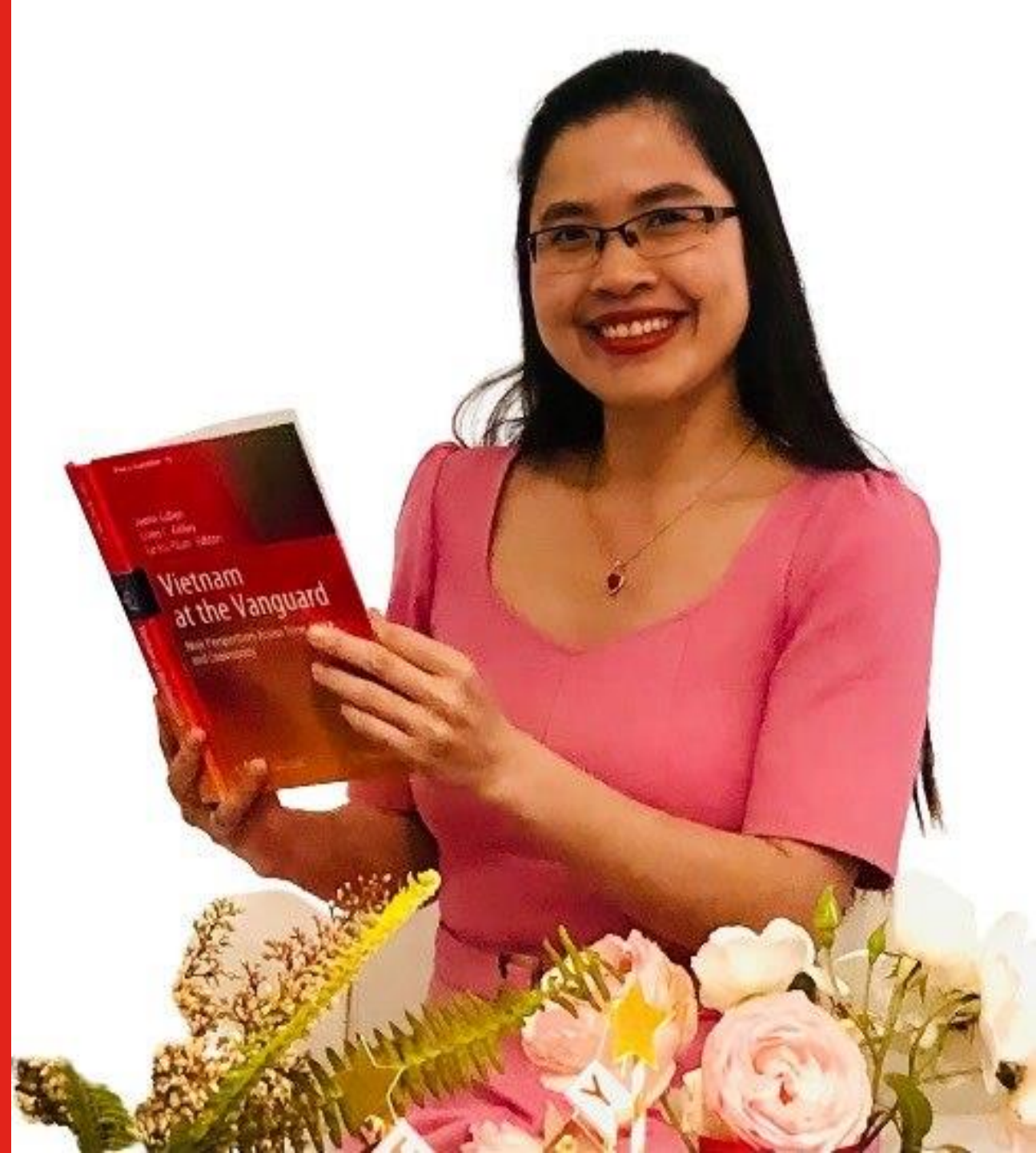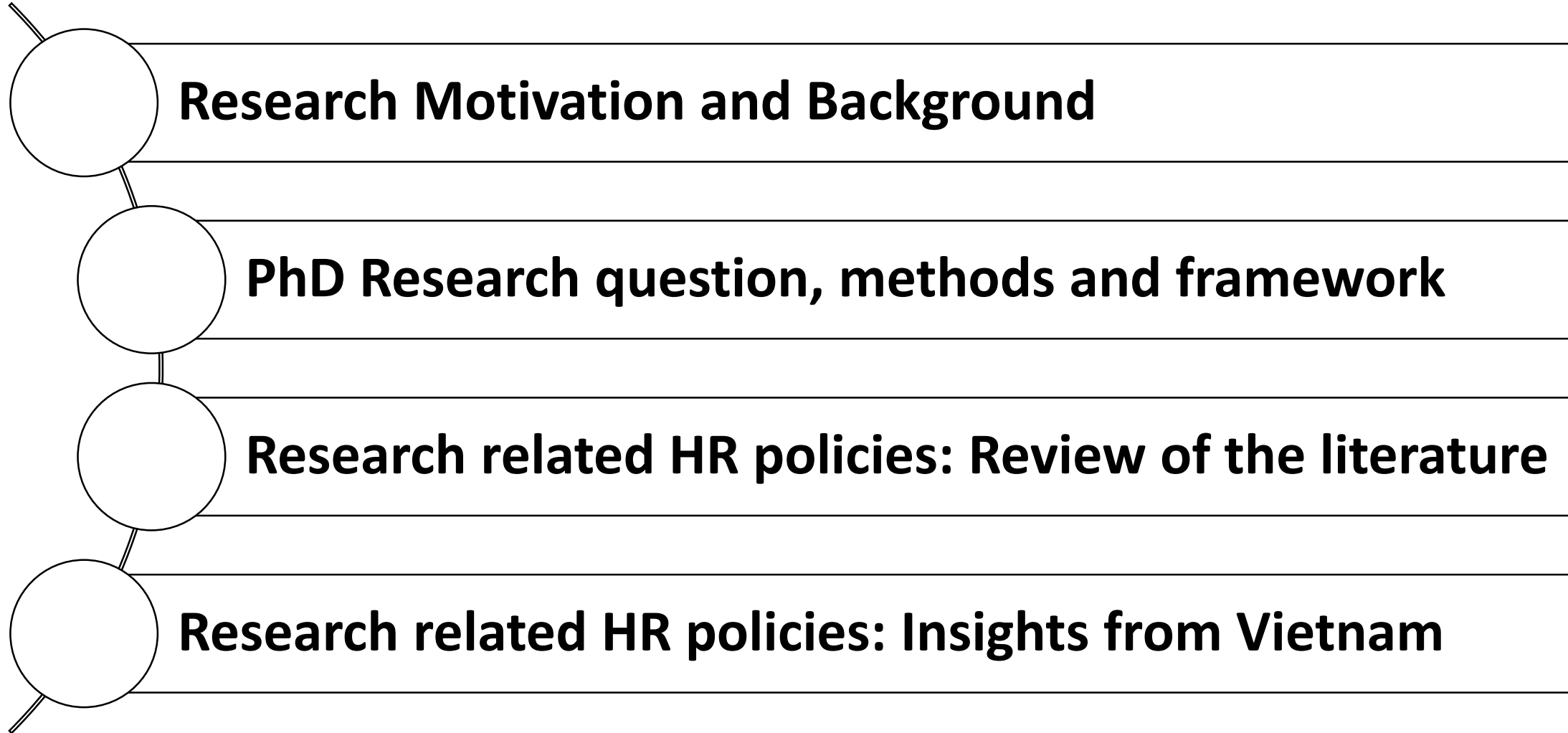
Presenter: Dr Huong Nguyen

Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile, 8th Nov 2022

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OUTLINE

Research Motivation and Background

PhD Research question, methods and framework

Research related HR policies: Review of the literature

Research related HR policies: Insights from Vietnam

PERSONAL MOTIVATION
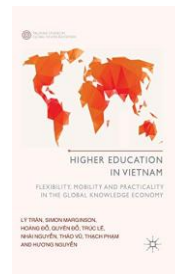

17 years in Thai Binh
Vietnam

13 years in Hanoi
Vietnam

14 years in Melbourne
Australia

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Research in Universities

Hương Thị Lan Nguyễn

HIGHER EDUCATION IN VIETNAM

FLEXIBILITY, MOBILITY AND PRACTICALITY IN THE GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

LY TRAN, SIMON MARGINSON, HOANG ĐỖ, QUYEN ĐỖ, TRUC LE, NHAI NGUYEN, THAO VU, THACH PHAM AND HUONG NGUYEN

Building University Research Capacity in Vietnam: Prospects, Problems, and Possibilities

Thi Lan Huong Nguyen

The challenges of developing research resources for leading Vietnamese universities

by
Thi Lan Huong Nguyen
LH Martin Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Management, University of Melbourne, Australia and Hanoi University of Industry, Vietnam

University strategic research planning: a key to reforming university research in Vietnam?
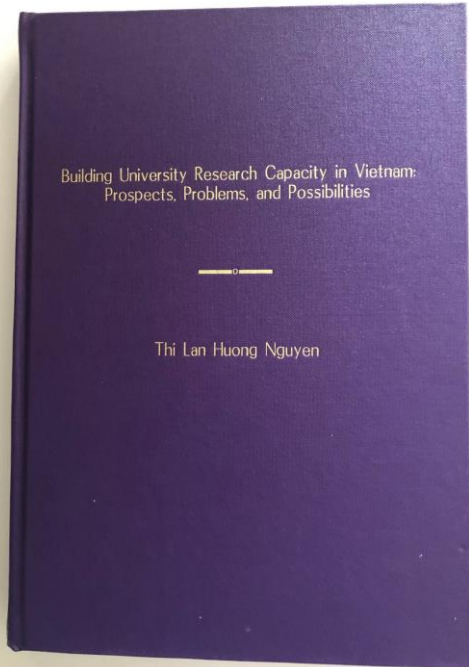
Huong Thi Lan Nguyen[a] and Bernadine Van Gramberg[b]

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ABSTRACT
Despite being accepted as a key function in research management, research planning seems to be a neglected practice in some higher education institutions, particularly in economically disadvantaged countries such as Vietnam. This paper addresses a research gap in this area by examining (1) the practices of research planning at four leading Vietnamese universities and (2) the extent to which research planning is undertaken. Through 55 semi-structured interviews with university participants, the study found that despite having goals to be research leaders in the country, the four Vietnamese universities pursue a compliance-based rather than a strategic-based approach to research planning. Based on a framework for measuring strategic research planning, this study proposes strategies and processes to enhance such planning capacity, which may improve research performance.

KEYWORDS
Strategic management; strategic planning; research management; research leadership; university strategic research planning; Vietnamese higher education

Higher Education in Market-Oriented Socialist Vietnam pp 63–86 | Cite as

A Review of University Research Development in Vietnam from 1986 to 2019
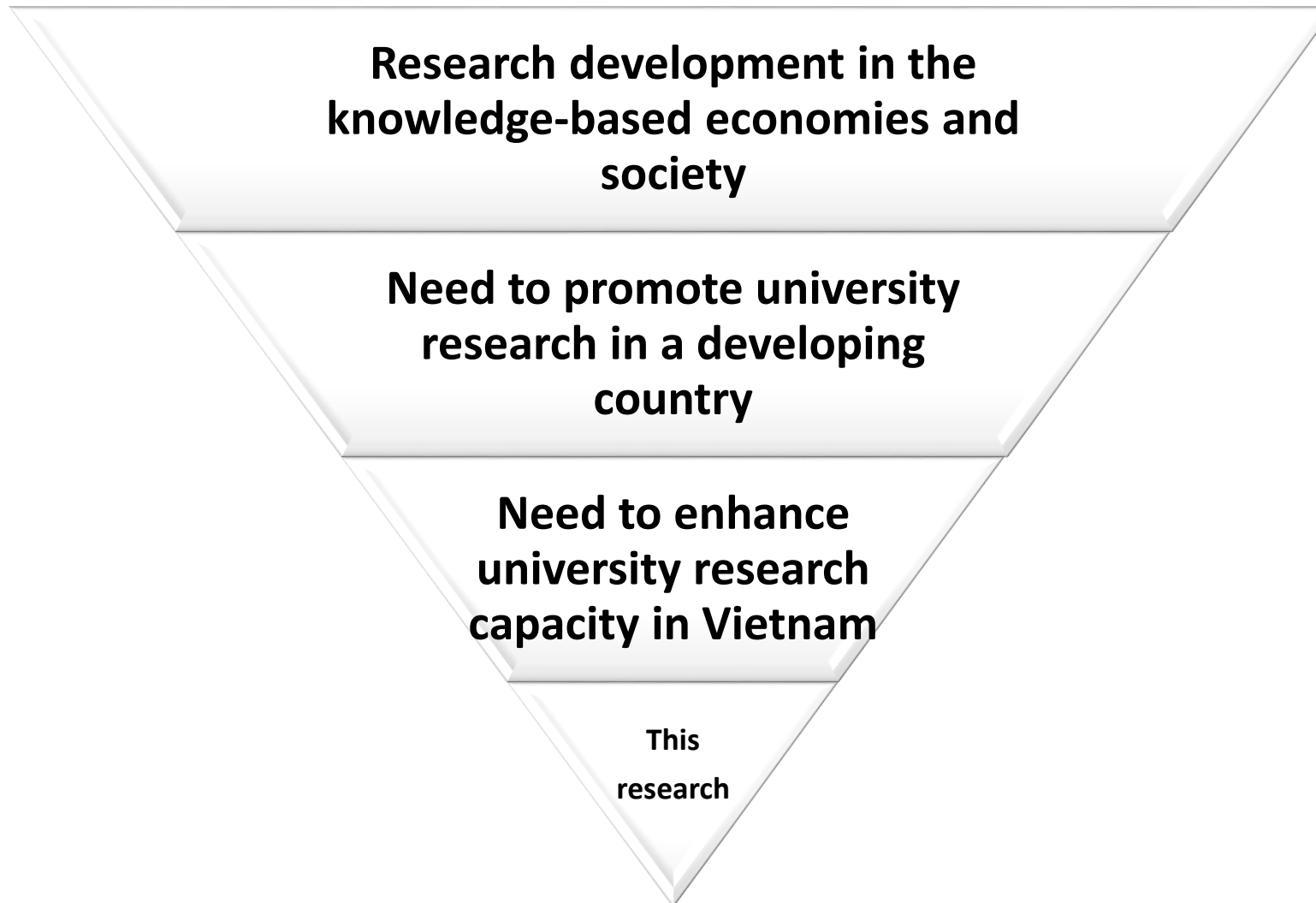
Huong Thi Lan Nguyen

Chapter 12
Developing a University Research Culture in Vietnam: A Leadership Conceptual Framework

Huong Thi Lan Nguyen and Timothy Marjoribanks

LA TROBE BUSINESS SCHOOL | AACSB ACCREDITED

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RESEARCH CONTEXT

Research development in the knowledge-based economies and society

Need to promote university research in a developing country

Need to enhance university research capacity in Vietnam

This research

VIETNAM'S STRENGTHS AS A NEW PLAYER IN THE GLOBAL HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

Vietnam is the **fifteenth most populated country in the world**

Vietnam is **ranked as a new lower-middle- income country and is among the world's fastest-growing economies**.

Vietnam is **one of three Association of Southeast Asian Nations Countries with the highest numbers of HEIs**, with a total of 235 universities. About 30% of school leavers enrolled at tertiary level.

From 2011 to 2019, **Vietnam has achieved the fastest growth rate in the number of ISI indexed English articles**, averaging 22% more annually.

In 2019, for the first time, **Vietnamese universities were included in quality worlds university rankings**

VIETNAM'S CHALLENGES IN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY AND PERFORMANCE

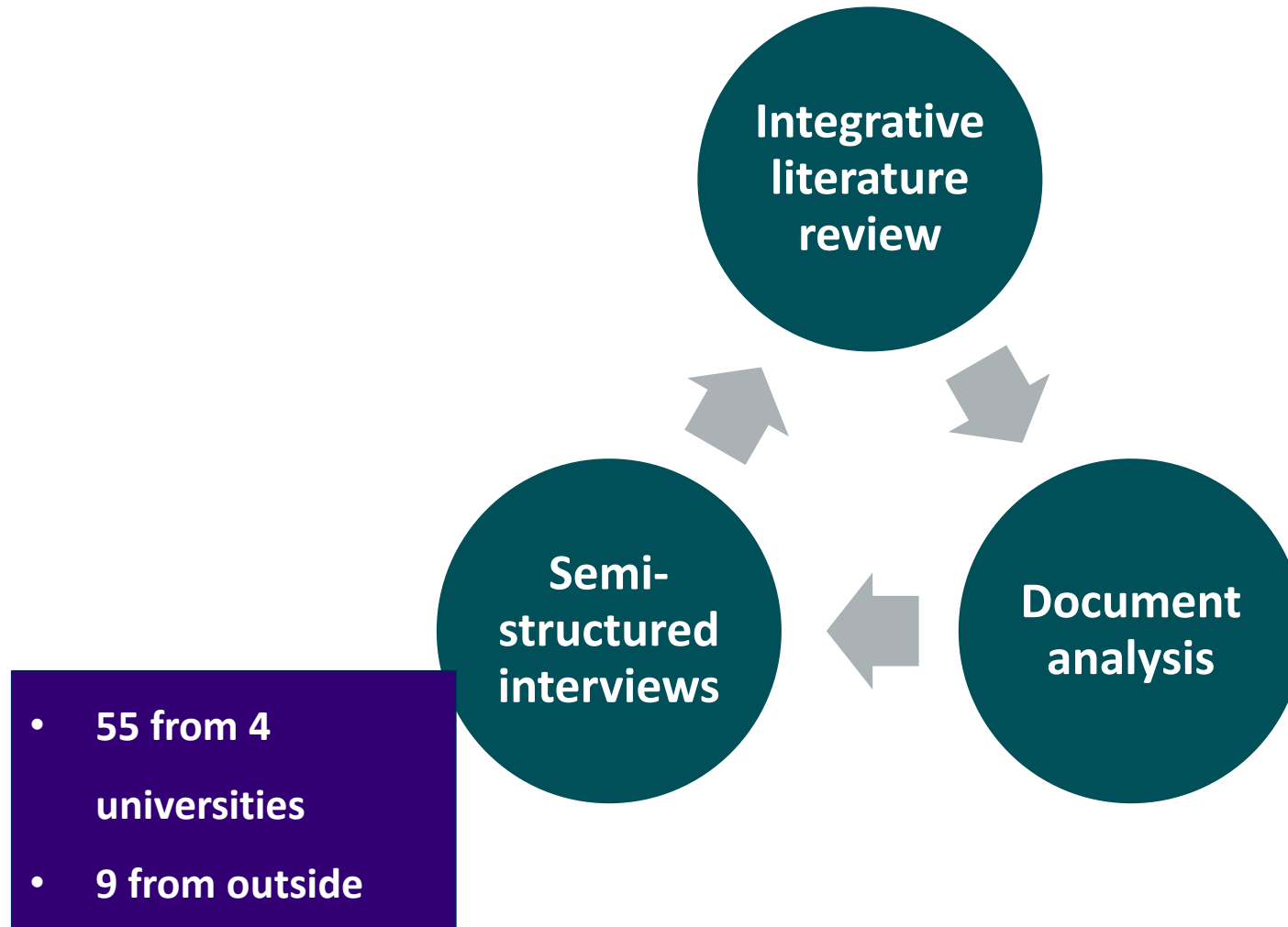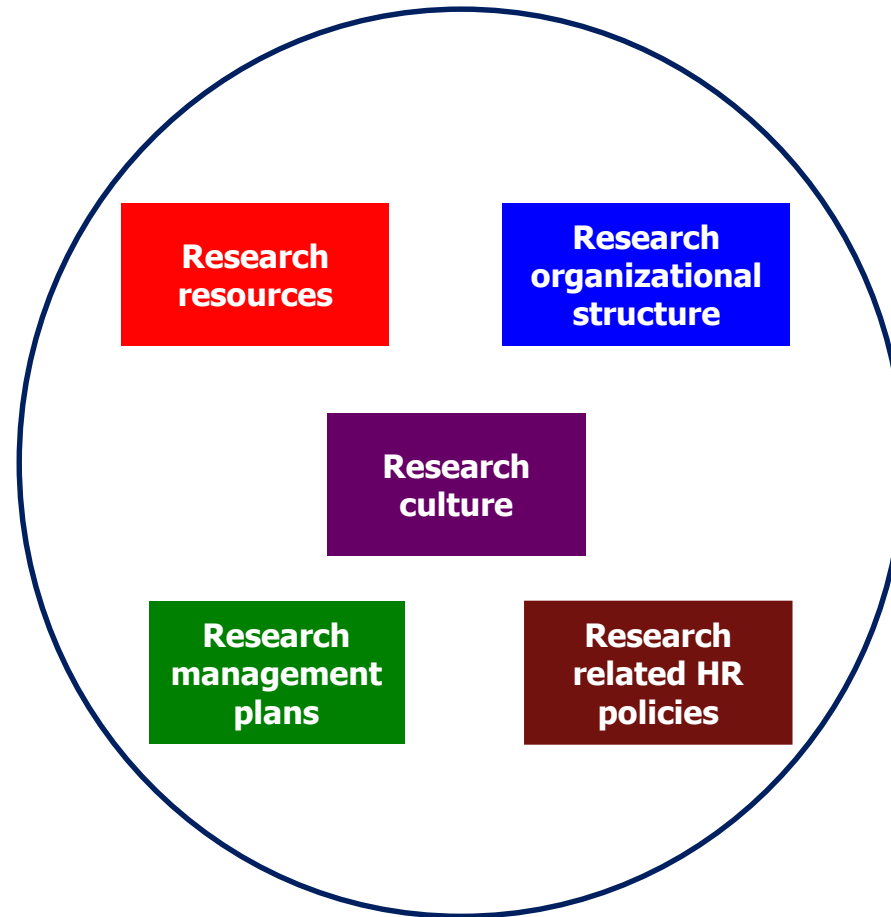|	
Poor human resources	**Only 25% hold a Ph.D. qualification; 1% are professors and 6% are associate professors**
Limited funding for research	**Vietnam's Gross Domestic Expenditure on research and development as a % of GDP** was only **0.5% in 2017, lower than the world average, at 1.7%**
Low research productivity & performance	The number of ISI-indexed English articles equals **only 28% of Singapore's and Malaysia's** and **43% of Thailand's**
Few world ranked universities	**Only 2 Vietnamese universities were ranked in top 700-1000 only; one in top 1000 i**n the 2020 Times Higher Education ranking**.**

OVERALL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What are the strategies and processes employed by Vietnamese universities to build and enhance research capacity and performance and how can these be strengthened?

RESEARCH METHODS

Integrative literature review

Document analysis

Semi-structured interviews

- **55 from 4 universities**
- **9 from outside**

ESSENTIALS OF BUILDING RESEARCH CAPACITY FOR UNIVERSITIES

High Educ (2016) 71:231–251
DOI 10.1007/s10734-015-9898-2

Building human resources management capacity for university research: The case at four leading Vietnamese universities

T. L. Huong Nguyen[1]

Published online: 21 May 2015
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Abstract At research-intensive universities, building human resources management (HRM) capacity has become a key approach to enhancing a university's research performance. However, despite aspiring to become a research-intensive university, many teaching-intensive universities in developing countries may not have created effective research-promoted HRM policies. This study investigates the extent to which four leading universities in Vietnam have motivated their academics to improve research performance. By analysing policy documents and 55 semi-structured interviews with university leaders, managers, and academics, the study found that compared to the "ideal" research-enhanced HRM policies employed by research-intensive universities, the four case-study Vietnamese universities have shown their recognition of academic research; however, their HRM policies are not powerful enough to encourage academics to do research to the best of their potential. In realizing their vision of becoming research-oriented universities, the four Vietnamese universities should employ a long-term HRM capacity-building strategy by providing stronger remuneration packages for academics, applying explicit indicators in assessing lecturers' research performance, and building a comprehensive staff development agenda for research team building. However, for the four universities to implement these recommendations, changes must also be made at the system level. The Vietnamese government must allocate more research funding and confer a higher level of autonomy to universities so that they can implement their desired HRM policies to accelerate institutional research capacity and performance.

WHO ARE KEY RESEARCH HUMAN RESOURCES?

Research leaders/research champions	Academic staff who head a recognized research group or teams within units of university-based research. They provide the overall research vision and identifies the techniques, methodologies, and facilities necessary for the research projects.
Support staff	E.g., technicians are often an important part of a research group, especially in engineering and medical and science research areas
Graduate students	Institutions that provide doctoral training consistently have a higher level of research output than other types of institution

WHY RESEARCH RELATED HR POLICIES?

A shortage of capable researchers

Researchers' low remuneration and heavy teaching load

Migration of talent

KEY RESEARCH RELATED HR POLICIES

Hiring the right people

Retaining staff

Developing staff

HIRING THE RIGHT PEOPLE

Ideal research-enhanced HRM practices
• Based on research achievement and potential; • Require an international reputation in research and/or target best appointments internationally; • Offer attractive packages of remuneration and apply careful probationary procedures

AN EXAMPLE

Professor Han is a Highly Cited Researcher by Clarivate Analytics (Thomson Reuters) in 2014-2016, 2018-2020. He is one of Australia's Top 5 Lifetime Achievers (Research Superstars) in Engineering and Computer Science in The Australian's Research Magazine in 2019 and 2020. He is ranked No. 320 in the world ranking in the 6th Edition of the 2020 Ranking of Top 1000 Scientists in the field of Computer Science and Electronics and No. 5 in Australia in the field of Computer Science and Electronics according to Guide2Research.

Professor Qing-Long Han

LA TROBE HIRING: PROFESSOR, PHYSIOTHERAPY

Skills and knowledge required for the position

PhD or equivalent accreditation recognised by the University/profession.

Proven commitment to the highest quality teaching in related discipline or professional fields,

including evidence of leadership in teaching and curriculum development at postgraduate levels.

Demonstrated ability to attract honours/postgraduate research students and supervise to successful completion.

Distinguished record of nationally and/or internationally recognised research, with evidence of the highest quality and/or impact. Where relevant evidence of citations and journal rankings should be given.

Evidence of an international reputation in the appointee's professional field, and of significant national and international influence on their profession.

Evidence of achievement in fostering and supporting research teams, a research culture and in mentoring early career staff.

Strong record of external research funding through competitive grants, industry grants or consultancies.

Evidence of effective leadership and management at department, school and/or university level.

Demonstrated ability to lead teams and promote a collaborative and collegial manner.

HIRING THE RIGHT PEOPLE

Emerging lessons for developing countries
• Attract the diasporas at the initial phase • Maximize the diasporas' contribution • Localize research expertise in the long run

DEVELOPING STAFF

Ideal research-enhanced HRM practices
• Advance academics' qualifications.   • Provide research skills development programmes.   • Nurture the research career as an institutional responsibility.

AN EXAMPLE: LA TROBE UNIVERSITY RED

Research Education and Development (RED)

The Graduate Research School's Research Education and Development (RED) team supports and assists La Trobe graduate researchers and academic staff in:

- quality research practices

- strategies for success in research publication and funding

- insight into researcher career paths and industry sectors

- practising excellent research communication skills.

LA TROBE 2022 RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

GR	Graduate Researcher
ECR	Early Career Researcher
S	Supervisor

Weekly

[Shut up and write! (SUAW)](#)

AN EXAMPLE

Tuesday, 8 November	Digital Research Drop In	O	All	Join in via Zoom
Wednesday, 9 November	Longitudinal Trials with REDCap	O	All	Expression of interest
Friday, 11 November	Campus+: Campus+: Pitch Perfect: how to develop a stellar pitch deck	O	All	Book now
Monday, 14 November	Word: Formatting your thesis	O	GR	Book now
Tuesday, 15 November	How to write a literature review	O	GR	Book now
Tuesday, 15 November	LTUAcWriMo Reverse your Outline Editing workshop	O	All	Book now
Tuesday, 15 November	Systematic Searching for Systematic Reviews	O	All	Book now
Tuesday, 15 November	Graduate Researcher Information Skills (GRIS) Part 2	O	GR	Book now
Tuesday, 15 November	Beyond Basics: Conditionals and Visualisation in Excel	O	All	Expression of interest
Wednesday, 16 November	Planning for Publication during graduate research candidature	O	GR	Book now

DEVELOPING STAFF

Emerging lessons for developing countries
•Provide support to help existing academics deal successfully with stress associated with new requirements for faculty research performance and capability

REWARDING STAFF

Ideal research-enhanced HRM practices
• Actively use research performance indicators to assess staff performance. • Provide both financial and non-financial rewards. • Provide relevant rewards at relevant times.

AN EXAMPLE: LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

Research Excellence Awards 2022

Nominations now open

Vice Chancellor's Research Awards 2022

2022 Vice Chancellors Research Excellence Awards. Nominate here and find selection criteria for each award.

Vice-Chancellor's Research Award Categories

Early Career Research Excellence Award

Mid-Career Research Excellence Award

Excellence in Graduate Research Supervision Award

Excellence in Industry Engagement Award

Excellence in Research Impact Award

REWARDING STAFF

Emerging lessons for developing countries

- In developing criteria for faculty research performance evaluation and reward:
  - Allow academics to decide their targeted journals for publication;
  - Develop different teaching-research proportion workloads for different disciplines and different career tracks for academics.

KEY RESEARCH RELATED HR POLICIES

THE FOUR UNIVERSITIES' HRM POLICIES TO ENHANCE RESEARCH

Hiring

- **Value PhD qualifications**

- **Neglect actual research performance**

"Overseas trained Ph.D. holders are recruited straightaway without having to sit for selection exams" (Deputy Dean, Natural Sciences).

"A newly recruited lecturer can only get 85 % of the basic salary in the first year as a probation staff; however, the university pays them 100 % right upon recruitment" (Manager, Human Resources).

Even though these institutions considered numbers of publications as one of the selection criteria, normally they only assessed candidates against their teaching capacity and general work ethics.

THE FOUR UNIVERSITIES' HRM POLICIES TO ENHANCE RESEARCH

Developing

- **Upgrade academics' formal qualifications**
- **Neglect other attributes for research training**

I don't feel that I am prevented by university leaders or managers from doing anything. In other words, they are all kind, they encourage and support in the sense that they don't stop me from doing things, but they haven't been able to actively offer me favourable conditions to do my work… I have to be mainly active in my own work. (Lecturer, Natural Sciences)

THE FOUR UNIVERSITIES' HRM POLICIES TO ENHANCE RESEARCH

Rewarding

- **Reward both financially and non-financially**

- **Only encourage rather than strongly motivating researchers**

Calculate research-related activity in total workload

Set research performance as a prerequisite for nominating lecturers for institutional, ministerial, and national best staff titles of the year; and

Reward lecturers who publish in refereed international journals.

CALCULATING RESEARCH-RELATED ACTIVITY IN TOTAL ACADEMIC WORKLOAD

When research tasks are quantified and calculated in terms of hours, it shows lecturers that doing research is both a right and a responsibility. (Deputy Dean, Basic Medical)

SETTING RESEARCH PERFORMANCE AS A PREREQUISITE FOR NOMINATING LECTURERS FOR STAFF AWARDS

Although these awards do not bring many economic rights, it is a form of showing that, if people work well, continuously, and seriously, they are appreciated. This recognition in research can bring people happiness, not in terms of finance but purely in spirit. (Dean, Applied Medical)

REWARDING LECTURERS WHO PUBLISH IN REFEREED INTERNATIONAL JOURNALS

At the medical and natural sciences universities, researchers who publish in refereed international journals are honoured and rewarded with bonus money.

Impact factors of the journals are considered as an important criterion for deciding the level of awards.

THE FOUR UNIVERSITIES' HRM POLICIES TO ENHANCE RESEARCH

Hiring	Developing	Rewarding
• **Value PhD qualifications** • **Neglect actual research performance**	• **Upgrade academics' formal qualifications** • **Neglect other attributes for research training**	• **Reward both financially and non-financially** • **Only encourage rather than strongly motivating researchers**

THE PARTICIPANTS' SUGGESTED HRM POLICIES TO PROMOTE RESEARCH

Provide stronger financial incentives	'The first policy is to have an appropriate salary level that they can live on and gradually live better" (Director, Research Institute, Economics)
Apply more explicit indicators to assess lecturers' research performance	"We only assess lecturers' research performance in terms of the number of journal articles published and the number of research projects they participate in. We still have difficulties in assessing lecturers' research quality".
Apply a comprehensive system in building HRM research capacity	In recruiting the right people, universities must "roll out the red carpet" (Rector) to welcome "all people graduated from prestigious international universities" and "if they are trained locally, they should have a High Distinction
	Universities should pay more attention to train new researchers.
	"Recognition of a research star should be based on the number of international publications, citation indexes, and intellectual property certificates, etc." (Dean, Engineering).

SUMMARY

In the knowledge-based economies and society, universities in a developing country must build their research capabilities

At research intensive universities, three key research related HR policies: hiring the right staff, developing them, and rewarding them

In Vietnam, the four case-study universities have shown their recognition of academic research; however, their HRM policies are not powerful enough to encourage academics to do research to the best of their potential.

To build their research capabilities, the four universities must employ a strategic long-term HRM capacity-building strategy

Q & A?

THANK YOU

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