



## Book Review: “Factors Influencing the Research Productivity of Academics in Vietnam” by Dr. Nguyen Huu Quy (University of Foreign Language Studies - The University of Danang)

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Research is the key to the innovation and development of a country. Research is often a core component of a contemporary university, together with teaching, learning and services. Research productivity is integral to university ranking and reputation.

What are the key factors enabling and inhibiting the research productivity of academics? This is a burning question that universities across different regions of the world are trying to answer.

Dr. Nguyen Huu Quy’s book entitled “Factors Influencing the Research Productivity of Academics in Vietnam”, published by the Vietnam Education Publishing House addresses the above crucial question in the context of Vietnam. This book is a unique contribution to our understanding of the interconnection among individual and institutional factors, research motivational factors, and research behavioural factors in shaping research productivity of academics.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

Dr. Nguyen Huu Quy is an emerging researcher with a capacity to weave together qualitative and quantitative data to paint a picture about research capacity building and research productivity in Vietnam. Dr Nguyen’s research concerns include but are not limited to quality assurance and accreditation, university autonomy, university governance; educational leadership; human resource development, change management in higher education, and testing and assessment in foreign language teaching.

In 2019-2020, Vietnam had 237 universities, 236 colleges, and 76 research institutes, according to the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET, 2021). In this same period, there were 83,587 staff members in higher education, 87.7% of whom were academics (World Bank, 2020).

The book is a comprehensive text addressing academic engagement in research, research environment, research policies and research practice of Vietnamese higher education.

The book has 240 pages, consisting of 8 chapters: (1) Chapter One provides an overview of the study; (2) Chapter Two firstly discusses the context of Vietnamese Higher Education; (3) Chapter Three presents the literature review related to the research productivity of academics in many countries; (4) Chapter Four presents the research design and methodology used in the study; (5) Chapter Five discusses the qualitative research and quantitative research findings about the significant factors that influence the research motivation of academics; (6) Chapter Six discusses the significant factors that influenced the research behaviours of academics in the case study; (7) Chapter Seven

analyses factors that influenced the publishing outputs from 2009 to 2013 of academics from the case study; (8) Chapter Eight discusses implications for policy and practice.

A remarkable feature of this book is that the arguments are developed based on solid evidence. The book draws on a comprehensive case study of a leading Vietnamese university. It collects data through semi-structured interviews and a survey of 526 academics. This approach provides crucial insights into the factors that both inhibit and enable Vietnamese academics' research motivations and productivity. The empirical evidence presented in the book highlights how a positive research climate and community of good practice significantly motivates academics to undertake research.

***What is the impact of research environments on research motivation?***

This question is answered in detail in Nguyen Huu Quy's book. The main factors negatively affecting academics' research motivation include: heavy teaching load; low salary; insufficient professional meetings; and shortages of scholarly resources, research funding, and research infrastructure. Noticeably, in Nguyen Huu Quy's case study, there is dissatisfaction among academics about the university's research policy and the research climate in departments is not seen as positive.

***What is the impact of research motivation on research behaviour?***

This is the second key question addressed in Nguyen Huu Quy's book. There are 2 dimensions of the findings informed with qualitative and quantitative data. Based on the evidence of the qualitative data, if academics were paid a better salary, were involved in a research group, and in postgraduate supervision, they would have a high level of research motivation. The quantitative data shows that there were the relationships between four types of research motivation and three research behavioural factors: (1) The factor of research collaboration was influenced by intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and normative motivation; (2) The factor of postgraduate supervision was influenced by extrinsic motivation and normative motivation; (3) The factor of weekly research hours, was influenced by normative motivation.

Another significant question addressed in Nguyen Huu Quy's book is: ***What is the impact of research behaviours on research productivity?***

The book reports the associations between research behaviours and two categories of publishing outputs: (1) The total number of publishing outputs was positively associated with research collaboration, postgraduate supervision, and weekly research hours; (2) The total number of international refereed journal articles was associated with postgraduate supervision and weekly research hours.

I have read a number of books about higher education across different countries in which research productivity is a major component. However, Nguyen Huu Quy's book is unique as it offers valuable recommendations to improve academics' research productivity at individual, departmental, university, and national levels.

At the university level, in particular, Nguyen Huu Quy recommended the following approaches:

- Providing professional development to build research capacity.
- Providing early career academic development programs. In many countries, the universities have targeted programs to support early career academics to develop their research capacity.
- Providing more opportunities for academics to undertake a doctoral degree.

In 2019-2020, only 28.8% (21,106) of the academic staff members had a PhD qualification, while 61% (44,705) and 10.2% (7,489) held a master's degree and bachelor's degree respectively (World Bank, 2020).

- Prioritising more support for women academics to ensure more equity and access to research opportunities as these groups often have unique needs and experience disadvantages in research capacity and career advancement. There was an increase from 42.5% to 48.5% in the number of women academics in Vietnam between 2006 and 2018 (World Bank, 2020) but there has been a lack of targeted policy to support women academics.

- Establishing partnerships with international universities to nurture research collaboration.

Further research could consider a comparative study exploring research capacity building and productivity across universities in different regions of Vietnam since structural conditions, including institutional policies, play a key role in shaping these factors. Another area for further investigation is how internationalisation and what forms of internationalisation of research may impact on individual and institutional research productivity.

### 3. CONCLUSION

In sum, “Factors Influencing the Research Productivity of Academics in Vietnam” is a compelling and timely read for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners alike. I am particularly impressed by its comprehensiveness, its rigor in discussing the findings and implications based on rich empirical data, and its endeavors to draw practical implications to enhance the research capacity of Vietnamese universities.

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