

Training and developing programs for middle administrative managers at Viet Nam National University Ho Chi Minh City: An evaluation using the Kirkpatrick model

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ABSTRACT

In the context of university autonomy and increasingly intense competition, middle administrative managers play a pivotal role in advising, supporting leadership, and administering the operations of higher education institutions. Training and developing have therefore become a key strategy to enhance their capacity. This study evaluates the effectiveness of training and developing programs for middle administrative managers at seven member universities of Viet Nam National University Ho Chi Minh City, employing Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Model. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining a survey of 168 middle administrative managers with in-depth interviews with leaders, lecturers, and staff members. The findings indicate that the training and development programs generally yielded positive outcomes across all four levels: reaction, learning, behavior, and results with mean scores of 4/5 or higher. However, several limitations were identified: the programs remain generic, lacking tailored design to meet the specific tasks of middle administrative managers, while staff in charge of training and developing have limited capacity for advising and designing appropriate programs. Based on these findings, the article proposes solutions to improve the training and developing quality for middle administrative managers, including the development of a competency framework, specialized training modules, a professional unit for career development, and the establishment of periodic evaluation mechanisms. This study contributes empirical evidence to the field of higher education management in Vietnam and provides useful policy recommendations for universities in the current governance reform context.

Key words: training and developing programs, middle administrative managers, Kirkpatrick model, evaluate, university

INTRODUCTION

In the process of higher education reform and autonomy in Vietnam, universities are facing increasing challenges in governance and sustainable development. To operate effectively in an intensely competitive environment, universities require a team of middle administrative managers (MAMs) capable of advising, coordinating, and implementing strategies. As the bridge between senior leadership and functional units, MAMs not only convey institutional directions but also organize, supervise, and manage the activities of specialized departments¹. Consequently, the performance of MAMs has a direct impact on the achievement of institutional objectives².

Despite this, numerous studies reveal that university managers, including MAMs, often originate from academic backgrounds, possessing strong professional expertise but lacking formal training in management and leadership skills^{3,4}. Most of them assume managerial positions based on personal experience or self-study, without systematic preparation^{5,6}. This leads

to limitations in policy advising, strategic planning, resource management, and organizational administration.

Training and developing (T&D) have therefore become a critical strategy to develop the competencies of MAMs. International research confirms that T&D positively influences work performance, motivation, job satisfaction, and managerial commitment⁷⁻¹⁰. In Vietnam, the government has issued regulations on professional standards, training, and development for cadres, civil servants, and public employees, including middle-level leaders and managers^{11,12}. Nevertheless, the implementation in practice indicates that current T&D programs remain focused on meeting general requirements, while paying limited attention to the needs and specific characteristics of MAMs.

The research gap lies in the absence of systematic evaluations of T&D programs for MAMs in Vietnamese higher education, particularly through international models. This study addresses the gap by applying Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Model, thereby

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advancing local research and contributing context-specific insights to the global literature on higher education governance. Focusing on member universities of Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City (VNUHCM), the study employs surveys and interviews with key stakeholders to analyze program effectiveness. The findings provide empirical evidence on strengths and weaknesses, propose solutions for optimizing T&D effectiveness for MAMs, and contribute to improving university governance capacity during the current reform period.

RESEARCH CONCEPTS

Middle Administrative Managers in Higher Education

In organizational governance, middle managers are considered strategic actors. They possess not only qualitative insights from practice but also tacit knowledge that is valuable for strategy formulation and implementation¹³. Scholars argue that middle managers serve as the bridge between senior leaders and functional units, playing a critical role in operationalizing goals, translating strategic ideas into action, promoting innovation, and shaping organizational culture^{2,4,9,14}.

Within higher education, MAMs hold unique positions, typically as heads or deputy heads of offices responsible for areas such as academic affairs, human resources, student services, international cooperation, examinations, and research management¹⁵. They simultaneously serve as direct subordinates of university rectors - providing advice and implementing policies - while also managing staff in functional offices^{16,17}.

With this dual role, MAMs take on a wide range of complex responsibilities, including strategic advising, human resource management, resource coordination, performance monitoring, and organizational improvement^{18,19}. Numerous studies indicate that the effectiveness of MAMs has a direct influence on institutional operations, organizational performance, and achievements of development goals^{20,21}. They are therefore regarded as a pivotal intermediary force in higher education governance and have increasingly attracted scholarly attention²².

Motivational theories, such as McClelland's, also demonstrate that middle managers are often driven by a strong need for achievement, accompanied by a high demand for managerial capacity development to meet job requirements²³. These needs can only be effectively addressed through T&D programs specifically designed to reflect the distinctive characteristics of MAM positions.

Training and Developing Programs for Middle Administrative Managers

Human resource training and developing is one of the most important tools for organizational growth and has been shown to be positively associated with individual performance and organizational competitiveness^{24,25}. For MAMs, T&D creates dual value: it enhances their knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes while simultaneously improving the governance capacity of universities²⁶⁻²⁸. Furthermore, T&D fosters motivation, commitment, and job satisfaction among MAMs^{7,29}.

In Vietnam, the State has issued specific regulations regarding T&D for cadres, civil servants, and public employees, including middle-level leaders and managers in public institutions^{11,12}. Current programs often emphasize political theory, national defense and security, and general leadership standards. However, in practice, implementation within higher education institutions reveals that T&D content is largely "standardized" and insufficiently tailored to the professional roles and career development needs of MAMs. This lack of contextualization is a key reason why the long-term effectiveness of T&D has not been fully realized.

Thus, for T&D to be truly effective, programs must be developed through a needs-based approach, linked to a competency framework specific to MAMs and the practical contexts of individual institutions. Moreover, program effectiveness must be evaluated periodically using scientific tools to generate feedback for continuous improvement.

Evaluation of Training and Developing Programs

Evaluating the effectiveness of T&D programs plays a crucial role in human resource management, as it not only measures the extent to which training objectives are achieved but also provides empirical data for program improvement and managerial decision-making. Evaluation results enable higher education institutions to assess the relevance of program objectives, content, and delivery methods, as well as the extent of their impact on individuals and organizations³⁰. At the same time, evaluation serves as the basis for justifying resource investments, ensuring the alignment between training costs and achieved outcomes.

Over the years, numerous models have been developed and applied to training evaluation, such as the CIPP model (Context, Input, Process, Product), Phillips' five-level model, Kaufman's five-level

model, and Bushnell's IPO (Input-Process-Output) model^{31,32}. Nonetheless, Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Model remains one of the most widely used and influential frameworks due to its simplicity, logical structure, and high applicability^{23,32,33}. The model has been extensively employed in higher education research, ranging from leadership development and faculty training to managerial development³³. Specifically, Kirkpatrick's model assesses training effectiveness at four levels:

- **Level 1 – Reaction:** measures participants' satisfaction and perceptions of the program's objectives, content, methods, instructors, materials, and learning environment. This serves as a direct indicator of program relevance and attractiveness.
- **Level 2 – Learning:** determines the extent of knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired by participants during training, as well as their confidence and motivation to apply what they have learned.
- **Level 3 – Behavior:** reflects changes in participants' professional behaviors after the training, particularly their ability to apply new knowledge and skills in the workplace and to improve job performance.
- **Level 4 – Results:** measures the ultimate impact of the program on individuals and organizations, such as improved productivity, job quality, managerial efficiency, and contributions to institutional development goals.

The integration of these four levels allows for a comprehensive evaluation of both short-term factors (satisfaction, learning outcomes) and long-term effects (behavioral change, organizational results), thereby producing a holistic picture of T&D effectiveness. For this reason, the present study adopts Kirkpatrick's model as an appropriate analytical framework to evaluate T&D programs for MAMs at VNU-HCM's member universities.

Evaluation of Training and Developing Programs for Middle Administrative Managers at Member Universities of VNUHCM

Based on the roles, functions, and responsibilities specific to MAMs in higher education institutions, this study applies Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Model to construct an evaluation framework for the T&D programs in which MAMs at seven member universities of VNUHCM have participated. The framework, as presented in Table 1, is designed to capture both

short-term and long-term effectiveness, while ensuring alignment with the distinct requirements of MAM positions.

Specifically, the framework consists of four levels:

- **Reaction** – measuring MAMs' satisfaction with program objectives, content, delivery methods, instructors, support staff, materials, policies, facilities, duration, and learning environment.
- **Learning** – assessing the knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes acquired by MAMs after the training.
- **Behavior** – capturing changes in work-related behavior, including motivation, commitment, work style, and organizational engagement.
- **Results** – measuring the overall impact of the program on individual job performance, the effectiveness of functional offices, and contributions to the university's development goals.

This approach not only allows for an assessment of program effectiveness but also identifies strengths and weaknesses in implementation, thereby providing a scientific basis for improvement and for policy development regarding MAM capacity-building at VNUHCM.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Instruments

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to offer a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of T&D programs for MAMs.

The quantitative instrument was a survey questionnaire designed based on Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Model, consisting of 41 items grouped into four categories: Reaction (12 observed variables), Learning (7 observed variables), Behavior (10 observed variables), and Results (12 observed variables). All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly dissatisfied/Very little, 5 = Strongly satisfied/Very much). In addition, the questionnaire collected demographic information such as gender, age, educational qualification, job title, and academic rank.

Reliability testing showed Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranging from 0.863 to 0.937, all exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.60³⁴ indicating that the scales demonstrated high internal consistency, as presented in Table 2.

Alongside the survey, in-depth interviews were conducted to complement quantitative data and to validate the survey findings. The interview participants

Table 1: The Adaptation of Kirkpatrick’s Model of Evaluation of Training and Developing Programs for MAMs at VNUHCM Member Universities

Levels of evaluation	Evaluation Criteria	Measurement Instruments
Reaction	MAMs’ satisfaction with various aspects of the program: objectives, content, delivery methods, instructors, support staff, materials, policies, facilities, duration, and learning environment	MAM survey questionnaire
Learning	Degree of knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes acquired by MAMs after training	MAM survey questionnaire
Behavior	Changes in MAMs’ professional behavior: personal values, motivation, work engagement, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction	MAM survey questionnaire; interviews with MAMs, leaders, lecturers, and specialists
Results	Impacts on individual and organizational performance: MAMs’ task outcomes, effectiveness of functional offices, and contribution to institutional development goals	MAM survey questionnaire; interviews with MAMs, leaders, lecturers, and specialists

Source: Author

Table 2: The Reliability Coefficients

Scale	Variables	Cronbach’s Alpha	Number of Items
Reaction to training programs	Measuring MAMs’ satisfaction	0.937	12
Learning	Measuring learning outcomes of MAMs	0.863	7
Work behavior	Measuring changes in MAMs’ professional behavior	0.869	10
Work results	Measuring MAMs’ job performance outcomes	0.923	12

[Source: Author]

included seven MAMs (who had also taken part in the survey), two university leaders, two lecturers, and two staff members. This diversity of perspectives provided a multidimensional understanding of the behavioral changes and work outcomes of MAMs following participation in T&D programs.

Sample

The survey targeted the entire population of 211 MAMs (heads and deputy heads of departments) at the seven member universities of VNUHCM, regardless of whether they participated in T&D programs organized directly by VNUHCM, or by their universities. The focus was on evaluating the perceived effectiveness of T&D programs in general, rather than a single program. A total of 168 valid responses were obtained, yielding a response rate of 79.6%, ensuring the reliability of the quantitative dataset. The sample distribution is presented in Table 3, while the demographic characteristics of respondents are summarized in Table 4.

Data Analysis

The survey data were processed using SPSS 22.0, primarily employing descriptive statistics to calculate means, standard deviations, and percentages. The interview data were analyzed using content analysis, focusing on themes corresponding to the four levels of Kirkpatrick’s model. This approach enabled the qualitative findings to contextualize and validate the quantitative results.

RESULTS

Reaction to the Training and Developing Programs

The survey results indicate that MAMs were generally satisfied with the T&D programs, with mean scores across evaluation criteria ranging from 3.54 to 4.24 on a five-point scale (Table 5). The highest-rated aspect was institutional policies supporting participation in training (Mean = 4.24), reflecting positive perceptions of enabling mechanisms. Other highly rated factors

Table 3: The Number of Middle-level Managers Participating in the Survey at Seven Member Universities

University	Research Population	Valid Responses
University A	23	23
University B	34	33
University C	23	19
University D	31	19
University E	42	27
University G	27	25
University H	31	22
	211	168

[Source: Author]

Table 4: The Descriptive Statistics of Survey Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (N=168)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	121	72.0
	Female	47	28.0
Age	£40	33	19.6
	41-50	96	57.1
	> 50	39	23.2
Educational Qualification	Doctorate	76	45.2
	Master's	82	48.8
	Bachelor's	10	6.0
Job Title	Lecturer	107	63.7
	Specialist	61	36.3
Academic Rank	Associate Professor	42	25

[Source: Author]

included clear training objectives (Mean = 4.09), competent instructors with strong expertise and teaching skills (Mean = 4.08), and adequate, updated training materials (Mean = 3.93).

Nevertheless, certain aspects received lower ratings. Notably, the content was considered insufficiently tailored to the specific requirements of MAMs (Mean = 3.54), and the capacity of staff supporting T&D activities was evaluated less positively (Mean = 3.77). The interview data reinforced these findings, revealing that programs were largely “standardized” according to general professional standards, rather than designed to meet the distinctive needs of different managerial groups. Several MAMs suggested the development of specialized training modules focusing on strategic advising, planning, and operational implementation - competencies particularly critical to their positions.

On the whole, while the level of satisfaction was relatively high, the findings also highlight a gap in program design, particularly in addressing the professional development needs specific to MAMs.

Learning from the Training and Developing Programs

MAMs self-assessed learning at a high level, with mean scores ranging from 4.06 to 4.25 (Table 6). The highest-rated item “I gained substantial new knowledge through the T&D classes” - recorded a mean of 4.25, suggesting that the programs helped participants update their understanding of contemporary management knowledge and tools. Other positively rated items included possessing the knowledge and skills needed to perform assigned duties (Mean = 4.15), confidence in applying learning to work (Mean

Table 5: The Reaction to the Training and Development Programs

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
The T&D programs are appropriate and meet my needs.	3.77	0.940
Training objectives were clearly communicated.	4.09	0.725
Training content was tailored to the specific requirements of MAMs.	3.54	0.940
Training methods were appropriate and diverse (lectures, group work, practice, field trips, etc.).	3.85	0.734
Faculty members possess advanced qualifications, extensive disciplinary knowledge, and strong competencies in communication and interaction.	4.08	0.660
Support staff were competent in organizing training activities effectively.	3.77	0.784
Training materials were adequate, clear, and updated.	3.93	0.693
Institutional policies supported my participation in training (time, tuition, etc.).	4.24	0.679
Facilities and equipment for training programs met requirements	3.89	0.710
Program duration was appropriate to the volume of knowledge delivered.	4.04	0.753
I felt comfortable expressing my opinions and perspectives during the class.	3.99	0.796
Overall, I found the training programs useful in helping me perform better.	3.92	0.742
Overall Mean	3.91	0.584

[Source: Author]

= 4.10), and improved management of unit operations (Mean = 4.10).

The in-depth interviews corroborated these results: MAMs valued university-level capacity-building courses organized by VNUHCM, taught by experienced experts and leaders. Nonetheless, several respondents noted that course content remained largely generic and recommended more specialized content for MAMs, whose responsibilities differ from those of senior leaders and faculty members.

Behavioral Change

The factors reflecting changes in professional behavior all achieved relatively high mean scores (ranging from 4.00 to 4.35, Table 7). Notably, improvements were observed in advisory roles for senior leaders (4.35), collaboration with colleagues (4.27), and professional conduct and work attitude (4.26). These findings indicate that the program not only enhanced professional competencies but also positively influenced the behavior, working style, and cooperative spirit of middle academic managers (MAMs).

Interviews with institutional leaders and faculty members further confirmed these positive changes, highlighting that MAMs have become more proactive, attentive, and capable of leading their teams more effectively. These results are consistent with previous studies emphasizing the impact of T&D programs on

organizational commitment, sense of responsibility, and work motivation among middle managers^{7,10}.

Work Outcomes

At the results level, all twelve indicators achieved mean scores above 3.77, with the highest ratings for improved productivity and work quality (Mean = 4.35), adherence to organizational discipline (Mean = 4.32), and more effective advisory support for university leaders (Mean = 4.20) (Table 8). These findings demonstrate that the programs generated tangible impacts on both individual and organizational performance.

The interview responses further validated these outcomes. Many leaders, lecturers, and specialists confirmed significant improvements in MAMs’ managerial thinking, networking capabilities, and sense of responsibility. Senior administrators particularly noted that the T&D programs had contributed to improving internal governance quality, which is especially critical as member universities implement institutional autonomy.

To gain deeper insights into the effectiveness of the programs, we further examined whether training outcomes differed across demographic subgroups. Additional T-test and ANOVA analyses were conducted to examine differences across demographic subgroups. The results show that satisfaction and behavioral

Table 6: Learning from the Training and Developing Programs

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
I gained substantial new knowledge through the T&D programs.	4.25	0.713
I clearly understand new knowledge and skills and can apply them to assigned duties.	4.15	0.662
I feel confident applying what I learned in T&D to my day-to-day work.	4.10	0.689
The T&D programs guided me in using technology to organize and manage work.	4.10	0.757
The T&D programs helped me manage and organize my office's activities more effectively.	4.10	0.698
The training guided me to better fulfill my advisory role to university leaders.	4.06	0.756
The T&D programs broadened my understanding and awareness of my field of responsibility.	4.12	0.736
Overall Mean	4.11	0.51

[Source: Author]

Table 7: The Behavioral Change

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
I perform my advisory role to university leaders in governance and operations more effectively.	4.35	0.680
I put greater effort into managing my office's work to achieve institutional goals.	4.11	0.719
I recognize my strengths and potential in management work.	4.13	0.640
I feel strongly empowered to fulfill middle management duties.	4.00	0.750
I demonstrate strong commitment to my area of responsibility.	4.02	0.771
I am confident in addressing tasks flexibly and creatively.	4.08	0.787
I am willing to adopt and share new, useful knowledge, skills, and practices at work.	4.24	0.614
I have improved my work style, discipline, attitude, and participation in organizational tasks.	4.26	0.699
I have improved collegial relationships, showing readiness to cooperate and support others.	4.27	0.672
I perceive myself as being more motivated in my work.	4.07	0.722
Overall Mean	4.11	0.498

[Source: Author]

change did not differ significantly by gender or age group ($p > 0.05$), suggesting relatively consistent impacts of the T&D programs across these categories. In contrast, educational background revealed significant differences: Master's degree holders reported higher levels of knowledge acquisition ($M = 4.19$ vs. 4.02 ; $p = 0.035$) and work outcomes ($M = 4.21$ vs. 4.04 ; $p = 0.032$) compared with Doctoral degree holders. No significant difference was observed for behavioral change between these two groups.

DISCUSSION

This study demonstrated that T&D programs for MAMs at VNUHCM generated positive effects across all four levels of Kirkpatrick's model: high satisfaction, significant knowledge and skill gains, observable behavioral changes, and enhanced work performance. These findings corroborate international evidence that managerial training contributes to both individual growth and institutional outcomes, confirming the utility of Kirkpatrick's framework for assessing managerial development in higher educa-

Table 8: The Work Outcomes

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
I effectively practice organizational discipline.	4.32	0.730
I manage and control my own work more effectively.	4.12	0.724
I clearly recognize my strengths and weaknesses, which increases my confidence at work.	4.06	0.751
I am confident in developing personal plans to adapt to new challenges and requirements.	4.01	0.789
I provide more effective advisory support to university leaders within my assigned area.	4.20	0.685
I perform better as a bridge between leadership and staff, helping to align expectations.	4.03	0.704
I improve productivity and work quality by applying acquired leadership and management skills.	4.35	0.653
I generate new initiatives and ideas for implementing institutional tasks.	4.16	0.699
I have been recognized or rewarded for quality improvements achieved after applying T&D knowledge.	3.77	0.804
I lead my office to build cohesion and leverage collective strengths to fulfill assigned task.	4.03	0.763
I guide my office in aligning unit-level tasks with institutional objectives.	3.97	0.754
I expand and strengthen cooperative relationships with other units within the university.	4.11	0.759
Overall Mean	4.13	0.519

[Source: Author]

tion ^{7,10,35,36}.

At the same time, the study highlights a critical misalignment between current training provision and the specific functions of MAMs. Much of the training remains generic, compliance-oriented, and insufficiently adapted to the unique responsibilities of academic middle management. This concern has also been noted in international studies, where standardized T&D models were found to reduce relevance and sustainability when applied across diverse managerial contexts ^{4,37}. In Vietnam, this risk is compounded by the fact that T&D activities within universities are often administered by units with limited professional expertise, focusing primarily on procedural requirements rather than competency-based development ³⁸. Such tendencies risk reducing managerial capacity-building to a formal obligation rather than a transformative process, thus constraining its long-term impact.

Subgroup analyses yield additional insights. Gender and age did not significantly influence training outcomes, suggesting that the programs have achieved a baseline of inclusivity. However, clear divergences emerged between Master’s and Doctoral participants. Master’s degree holders reported greater knowledge acquisition and practical gains, while Doctoral degree holders perceived fewer benefits. This pattern indicates that existing content is more closely aligned with

the developmental needs of Master’s-level managers, whereas those with Doctoral qualifications may require training that is more research-informed, policy-oriented, or strategically advanced. Similar distinctions have been documented in comparative studies, underscoring the need for differentiated learning trajectories in professional development ^{12,19}.

The contribution of this study is both methodological and contextual. Methodologically, it represents the first application of Kirkpatrick’s four-level framework to the evaluation of academic middle management training in Vietnam, thereby extending the framework’s relevance to a reforming higher education system ^{9,25}. Contextually, the findings shed light on the complex role of MAMs in a system transitioning toward institutional autonomy and governance reform, a challenge that has been highlighted in regional and global scholarship on higher education governance ^{3,14,32}. By documenting both the strengths and the limitations of current practice, the study provides empirical grounding for debates on how managerial training can be reconfigured to support systemic transformation goals.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that current T&D programs at VNUHCM are effective in producing short-term improvements but less successful in building sustained, role-specific competencies. This

should not be interpreted as programmatic failure, but rather as a transitional stage in the evolution of managerial capacity-building within Vietnamese higher education. As universities continue to pursue autonomy and global integration, the challenge lies not only in providing training but also in developing context-sensitive, competency-based approaches that can foster lasting improvements in governance and leadership.

Nevertheless, these findings should be interpreted with caution. While they provide robust evidence of the effectiveness and limitations of current T&D initiatives, they cannot capture the full complexity of contextual factors - such as organizational culture, leadership styles, or resource constraints - that may also shape training outcomes. Addressing these issues requires further investigation, which is discussed in the following section on study limitations.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has several limitations. The findings are based primarily on the self-reported survey data, which may be subject to response bias and fail to capture long-term impacts. Although the in-depth interviews included university leaders, lecturers, and staff, the small number of participants limits the diversity of perspectives. In addition, the study did not account for institutional differences or the number of T&D programs attended.

Future research should broaden stakeholder participation and consider institutional contexts, strategic orientations, and MAMs' personal motivations for engaging in training. Subgroup analyses - such as comparisons across universities or between participants with varying levels of program exposure - would provide a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of program effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study affirm the pivotal role of T&D in strengthening the capabilities of MAMs, thereby bolstering governance and operational effectiveness at VNUHCM member universities. The programs equipped MAMs with relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes, culminating in demonstrable behavioral changes and enhanced work quality.

Nonetheless, the findings also reveal a key limitation: current T&D content remains oriented toward generic position standards, with insufficient emphasis on role-specific competencies and the practical needs of MAMs. This lack of specialization is posited

to diminish the long-term sustainability of training outcomes. Subgroup analysis additionally indicated broadly positive effects across gender and age groups, but notable differences between Master's and Doctoral degree holders in knowledge acquisition and work performance. These findings underscore the need for differentiated training pathways tailored to participants' academic qualifications.

Ultimately, the study presents practical evidence to inform the development of the MAM workforce at universities and contributes context-specific insights to the global literature on higher education governance.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

The findings of this study offer several implications for the improvement of training and development for MAMs within VNUHCM. These implications can be addressed at two levels: the system level (VNUHCM) and the institutional level (member universities).

At the system level, VNUHCM should establish a specialized competency framework for MAMs that reflects their core functions—strategic advising, human resource management, resource coordination, and performance supervision. This framework would provide a scientific foundation for designing relevant T&D content and serve as a reference for recruitment, evaluation, and career progression. Furthermore, VNUHCM should strengthen institutional capacity for T&D by creating a dedicated professional development unit or partnering with reputable training organizations, thus ensuring that programs are evidence-based, modern, and responsive to system-wide needs.

At the institutional level, universities should move beyond standardized training models and develop modular, individualized programs tailored to the specific roles of MAMs. Training modules should emphasize strategic advisory skills, departmental leadership, and coordination with senior executives. Institutions should also implement systematic evaluation and continuous improvement mechanisms, drawing on multi-source feedback from participants, leaders, peers, and staff to refine both program content and delivery. Importantly, subgroup analysis identified differences between Master's and Doctoral degree holders in knowledge gains and work performance. This highlights the need for differentiated training pathways, with more advanced, research-oriented, or policy-focused modules for Doctoral-level managers, and practice-oriented modules for Master's-level participants. Such differentiation would optimize training relevance and effectiveness while addressing disparities identified in the findings. Finally,

T&D should be embedded in institutional development strategies as a key element of human resource planning, directly aligned with governance reform, institutional autonomy, and quality enhancement. By implementing solutions at both the system and institutional levels, VNUHCM can establish a coherent and adaptive framework for professional development, strengthen the managerial capacity of MAMs, and ultimately improve governance quality across the higher education system.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

T&D: Training and Developing

MAM: Middle Administrative Manager

VNUHCM: Viet Nam National University Ho Chi Minh City

COMPETING INTERESTS

This manuscript has no conflicts of interest.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

I declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this scholarly article. The research, data collection, analysis, and interpretation were conducted entirely and independently by myself without any external influence or assistance. I personally designed the research framework, prepared and administered the survey, conducted interviews, and systematically performed both statistical and qualitative analyses. The writing, critical editing, and finalization of the manuscript were solely undertaken by me. No other individual or organization contributed to the conceptualization, drafting, or revision of this paper. I am fully and solely responsible for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the work presented herein.

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TÓM TẮT

Trong bối cảnh tự chủ đại học và sự cạnh tranh ngày càng gay gắt, đội ngũ viên chức quản lý hành chính cấp trung giữ vai trò then chốt trong việc tham mưu, hỗ trợ lãnh đạo và tổ chức điều hành hoạt động của các cơ sở giáo dục đại học. Do đó, đào tạo và bồi dưỡng đã trở thành chiến lược quan trọng nhằm nâng cao năng lực cho đội ngũ này. Nghiên cứu này đánh giá hiệu quả các chương trình đào tạo và bồi dưỡng dành cho viên chức quản lý hành chính cấp trung tại bảy trường đại học thành viên của Đại học Quốc gia Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh dựa trên Mô hình bốn cấp độ của Kirkpatrick. Phương pháp nghiên cứu hỗn hợp được áp dụng, kết hợp khảo sát 168 viên chức quản lý hành chính cấp trung với phỏng vấn sâu các nhà lãnh đạo, giảng viên và chuyên viên. Kết quả cho thấy các chương trình đào tạo và bồi dưỡng nhìn chung mang lại tác động tích cực ở cả bốn cấp độ: phản ứng, học tập, hành vi và kết quả, với điểm trung bình đạt từ 4/5 trở lên. Tuy nhiên, nghiên cứu cũng chỉ ra một số hạn chế: chương trình vẫn mang tính chung chung, thiếu thiết kế chuyên biệt đáp ứng đặc thù công việc của viên chức quản lý hành chính cấp trung, trong khi đội ngũ phụ trách đào tạo và bồi dưỡng còn hạn chế về năng lực tham mưu và thiết kế chương trình phù hợp. Trên cơ sở đó, bài báo đề xuất các giải pháp nhằm nâng cao chất lượng đào tạo và bồi dưỡng, bao gồm: xây dựng khung năng lực, phát triển các học phần chuyên biệt, hình thành đơn vị chuyên trách về phát triển nghề nghiệp, và thiết lập cơ chế đánh giá định kỳ. Nghiên cứu này cung cấp bằng chứng thực nghiệm cho lĩnh vực quản lý giáo dục đại học tại Việt Nam, đồng thời đưa ra những gợi ý chính sách hữu ích cho các trường đại học trong bối cảnh đổi mới quản trị hiện nay.

Từ khoá: đào tạo và bồi dưỡng, viên chức quản lý hành chính cấp trung, mô hình Kirkpatrick, đánh giá, đại học

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