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**MANAGING THE DEVELOPMENT OF
PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE OF JUNIOR
FACULTY THROUGH MENTORING AT HIGHER
EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN VIETNAM**

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INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale

Digital transformation, artificial intelligence and international integration are placing increasing demands on higher education to enhance the quality of teaching, research and service to society and the community, while strengthening accountability. UNESCO (2022) emphasises the need for comprehensive transformation in higher education in response to technological change and societal needs. Faculty members' professional competence must therefore be continuously updated and developed.

Junior faculty constitute an important part of the next generation of academics. However, they often have limited experience and must adapt to their working environments and clarify their career direction while meeting multiple demands. Inadequate support may adversely affect their professional development, job satisfaction and institutional commitment (Bucklin et al., 2014). Among the available forms of support, mentoring is particularly valuable because it addresses individual needs in relation to professional responsibilities and specific work contexts. When appropriately organised, mentoring also contributes to faculty development and an institutional culture of sharing, feedback and learning.

In Vietnam, Decision No. 89/QĐ-TTg and the Education Development Strategy to 2030, with a Vision to 2045 reaffirm the need to enhance faculty competence and promote research, innovation and digital transformation (Prime Minister, 2019, 2024). Developing faculty members' professional competence is therefore both an individual need and a responsibility of higher education institutions.

Without systematic management, however, mentoring may depend heavily on individual initiative, lack continuity and remain insufficiently aligned with institutional goals for faculty development. Effective management therefore requires aligning needs with objectives, defining participants' roles and coordinating their activities, establishing processes for monitoring, feedback and evaluation, and ensuring that appropriate resources and institutional support are available. Although existing research has examined the needs of early-career academics and the benefits of mentoring, how this process is managed has received insufficient attention, particularly regarding the relationships between individual needs, organisational objectives and the conditions for implementation.

Against this background, this study, entitled "*Managing Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development through Mentoring in Vietnamese Higher Education Institutions*", examines the theoretical foundations and practical aspects of managing this process and proposes appropriate management measures to strengthen faculty competence and enhance the quality of higher education.

2. Aim of the Study

Drawing on a systematic synthesis of relevant theory and an empirical investigation in Vietnamese higher education institutions, this study aims to examine junior faculty's current professional competence, existing practices for developing that competence through mentoring, and the management of this development process. On this basis, it proposes theoretically and empirically grounded management measures that are appropriate to the institutional context. These measures seek to strengthen the systematic management of professional competence development through mentoring, improve coordination among stakeholders, and enhance the capacity to monitor the process,

provide feedback and make adjustments, thereby contributing to more effective faculty development in the context of higher education reform.

3. Object and Subject of Research

3.1. Object of Research

The development of junior faculty's professional competence through mentoring in Vietnamese higher education institutions.

3.2. Subject of Research

The management of junior faculty's professional competence development through mentoring in Vietnamese higher education institutions.

4. Research Hypothesis

If junior faculty's professional competence development through mentoring in higher education institutions is managed systematically, guided by a professional competence framework and supported by the appropriate application of management functions, with alignment across needs identification and development objectives, stakeholder organisation and coordination, monitoring, feedback and evaluation, and implementation conditions, then the development process will be goal-directed, continuous and responsive to adjustment, thereby creating conditions conducive to junior faculty's professional competence development.

5. Research Tasks

To achieve its aim, the study undertakes the following tasks:

- Establish the theoretical foundations for junior faculty's professional competence development through mentoring and the management of this process in higher education institutions.
- Investigate, analyse and assess junior faculty's current professional competence, existing practices for developing that competence through mentoring, and the management of this process in the higher education institutions included in the study.
- Propose management measures for junior faculty's professional competence development through mentoring, assess their perceived necessity and feasibility, and pilot one selected measure in a specific institutional setting.

6. Research Questions and Scope of the Study

6.1. Research Questions

- What content, forms and mechanisms characterise junior faculty's professional competence development through mentoring in higher education institutions? What does the management of this process involve?
- What is the current state of junior faculty's professional competence, its development through mentoring, and the management of this development process in the higher education institutions included in the study? What are the main limitations and their underlying causes?
- Drawing on the theoretical foundations and empirical findings, what measures would be appropriate for managing junior faculty's professional competence development through mentoring in the higher education institutions included in the study?

6.2. Scope of the Study

6.2.1. Content Scope

The study focuses on managing junior faculty's professional competence development

through mentoring in Vietnamese public higher education institutions specialising in economics and related disciplines.

6.2.2. Study Participants

The study participants include university- and faculty-level administrators, lecturers, junior faculty, students and mentors at public higher education institutions specialising in economics and related disciplines.

6.2.3. Geographical Scope

The study was conducted at eight public higher education institutions specialising in economics and related disciplines across northern, central and southern Vietnam:

- Northern Vietnam: Foreign Trade University, National Economics University, University of Economics and Business, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, and Thuongmai University.
- Central Vietnam: University of Economics, the University of Danang, and University of Economics, Hue University.
- Southern Vietnam: University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City (UEH) and University of Economics and Law, Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City.

The institutions were selected to ensure broadly comparable educational contexts while providing geographical diversity across the three regions. The findings reflect conditions at the participating institutions and may inform practices at higher education institutions with similar characteristics. They are not intended to be statistically generalisable to Vietnam's entire higher education system.

6.2.4. Temporal Scope

Data on existing conditions and practices were collected between May and December 2023. The assessment of the proposed measures' perceived necessity and feasibility, together with the pilot implementation, took place during the subsequent phase of the study. Specifically, Measure 3 was piloted in October 2024.

7. Research Approaches and Methods

7.1. Research Approaches

7.1.1. Primary Approaches

7.1.1.1. Functional Approach to Management

7.1.1.2. Competence Development Approach

7.1.1.3. Systems Approach

7.1.2. Complementary Approaches

7.1.2.1. Job Role-Based Approach

7.1.2.2. Management Decentralisation Approach

7.2. Research Methods

The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issues under investigation and strengthen the credibility of the findings.

7.2.1. Theoretical Research Methods

Relevant scholarly literature and previous studies from Vietnam and other countries are analysed, synthesised and systematically organised to establish the study's theoretical foundations, key concepts and analytical framework. National and education-sector regulatory documents are also examined to establish the legal basis for the study.

7.2.2. Empirical Research Methods

- Questionnaire surveys
- Semi-structured interviews
- Expert consultation
- Pilot implementation

7.2.3. *Data Analysis Methods*

Quantitative data are analysed using descriptive statistics, and the internal consistency of the scales is assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient is used to examine the correspondence between the rankings of the proposed measures in terms of perceived necessity and feasibility. Data from the pilot implementation are analysed by comparing participants' self-assessments of their competence in performing the mentoring role before and after the training programme.

Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews are compiled, coded and analysed thematically in line with the study's focus. The themes cover junior faculty's professional competence, its development through mentoring, the management of this process and the factors influencing it. The qualitative findings complement the quantitative results, allow comparisons across the two sources of evidence and help explain the quantitative findings. They also illuminate aspects not measured by the questionnaire, particularly the use of foreign languages in professional activities. Selected participant quotations illustrate the interpretations presented in the study.

8. Key Propositions of the Thesis

- Junior faculty's professional competence development through mentoring is an ongoing, interactive process in which junior faculty receive support to identify their needs, set goals, undertake professional tasks and engage in professional experiences, receive feedback, assess their own progress, make adjustments and access appropriate resources. A mentoring relationship alone does not guarantee successful development. The process requires systematic organisation and management within higher education institutions.
- Limitations in junior faculty's professional competence development through mentoring relate both to individual mentors' competence and support practices and to the alignment of development needs and goals, stakeholder organisation and coordination, mechanisms for monitoring, feedback and evaluation, and supporting conditions. The management of this process therefore needs to be examined in terms of the coherence between the components of competence development and the management functions.
- Management measures informed by theory and empirical findings, when implemented in a coordinated manner and adapted to institutional conditions, can strengthen systematic management, improve coordination and enhance monitoring, feedback and adjustment in junior faculty's professional competence development through mentoring. In doing so, they can create conditions conducive to junior faculty's professional competence development.

9. Original Contributions of the Thesis

The thesis makes the following theoretical and practical contributions:

- Theoretical contributions. The thesis advances understanding of junior faculty's professional competence development through mentoring and the management of this process in higher education institutions. It develops a professional competence framework for junior faculty and explains how competence develops

through mentor–mentee interaction. This process encompasses needs identification, goal setting, engagement in professional tasks and experiences, feedback, self-assessment, adjustment and access to supporting resources. The thesis also identifies the principal management activities through a functional approach to management and clarifies the relationships among the components of the competence development process.

- Empirical contributions. The thesis provides evidence on three dimensions: junior faculty's professional competence, its development through mentoring and the management of this process in the participating higher education institutions. The findings identify achievements, limitations and their causes in relation to needs identification and goal setting, stakeholder organisation and coordination, monitoring, feedback and evaluation, and the provision of appropriate implementation conditions. They indicate that the limitations relate not only to mentors' competence and support practices but also to a lack of coherence in management, reflected in weak connections among these activities.
- Contributions to management practice. Drawing on theoretical and empirical research, the thesis develops an integrated set of management measures encompassing planning based on development needs and competence requirements, stakeholder organisation and coordination, development of mentors' competence in performing their role, monitoring, feedback and evaluation, provision of appropriate implementation conditions, and greater use of technology. These mutually supportive measures seek to strengthen systematic management, improve coordination and enhance monitoring, feedback and adjustment in junior faculty's professional competence development through mentoring. The measures were assessed for their perceived necessity and feasibility, and one selected measure was piloted in a specific setting.

10. Structure of the Thesis

In addition to the introduction, conclusions and recommendations, the thesis comprises three chapters:

Chapter 1: Theoretical Foundations for Managing Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development through Mentoring in Vietnamese Higher Education Institutions

Chapter 2: Empirical Foundations for Managing Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development through Mentoring in Vietnamese Higher Education Institutions

Chapter 3: Management Measures for Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development through Mentoring in Vietnamese Higher Education Institutions

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR MANAGING JUNIOR FACULTY'S PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH MENTORING IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

1.1. Literature Review

The thesis reviews Vietnamese and international literature across two main strands: (i) research on university faculty's professional competence development and (ii) research on the management of this development. Within each strand, particular attention is given to studies concerning junior faculty and mentoring.

1.1.1. Research on University Faculty's Professional Competence Development

1.1.2. Research on the Management of University Faculty's Professional Competence Development

1.1.3. Synthesis of Previous Research, Research Gaps and Priorities for the Present Study

The review of Vietnamese and international literature reveals a substantial body of research on faculty members' professional competence, its development and the management of this development. Previous studies have examined various aspects of faculty members' professional work and highlighted the importance of continuous competence development grounded in professional practice. They have also recognised the growing role of higher education institutions in organising, supporting and facilitating this process.

Research on mentoring has demonstrated its value as a means of developing professional competence, particularly during the early stages of an academic career. Studies have examined different forms of mentoring, mentors' roles, the quality of mentor - mentee interaction, programme design, and the monitoring and evaluation of implementation. In Vietnam, however, research remains limited and largely confined to particular institutions or disciplinary contexts. Consequently, a sufficiently broad evidence base on faculty members' professional competence development through mentoring has yet to emerge.

From a management perspective, international research has increasingly examined the role of higher education institutions in identifying needs, establishing development goals, organising and coordinating support, monitoring and evaluation, and providing appropriate supporting conditions. In Vietnam, by contrast, most studies have adopted perspectives centred on faculty development management or human resource management, or have focused on developing individual dimensions of competence. The management of junior faculty's professional competence development in relation to their particular characteristics and career stage remains insufficiently understood.

Several research gaps emerge from this review. First, few studies have systematically examined junior faculty's professional competence development through mentoring from a management perspective. Second, the roles and relationships of institutional managers, mentors and junior faculty have not been sufficiently analysed. In particular, further attention is needed to coordination mechanisms that align mentoring with junior faculty's professional competence development goals and institutional development strategies. Third, planning, organising implementation, directing, monitoring and evaluation, and the provision of appropriate implementation conditions have yet to be examined comprehensively in relation to professional competence development through

mentoring.

To address these gaps, the thesis examines the theoretical foundations of junior faculty's professional competence and its development, clarifying the nature and role of mentoring and the mechanisms through which it supports this process. It also develops a theoretical framework for managing junior faculty's professional competence development through mentoring. This framework informs an empirical investigation of existing practices in the participating higher education institutions, identifying limitations and their underlying causes. The findings provide the basis for proposing theoretically and empirically grounded management measures that are contextually appropriate and feasible.

1.2. Key Concepts

1.2.1. Junior Faculty

In this dissertation, a lecturer is defined as an educator employed at a higher education institution who performs the professional duties associated with their role in accordance with legal and institutional regulations.

Junior faculty are defined as lecturers under the age of 35 who have less than seven years of service as lecturers at higher education institutions.

1.2.2. Faculty's Professional Competence

Faculty's professional competence is defined as the capacity to draw on and integrate knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and reflective capacity to perform professional duties effectively within higher education contexts.

1.2.3. Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development in Higher Education Institutions

Junior faculty's professional competence development in higher education institutions is understood as a continuous, goal-directed process in which junior faculty receive support to progressively enhance and refine their professional competence through learning, experience, task performance and reflection within the professional environment of a higher education institution.

1.2.4. Mentoring and Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development through Mentoring

In this dissertation, mentoring for junior faculty is defined as support for professional competence development through interaction between a mentor with relevant professional experience and a junior faculty member, helping the latter adapt to the professional environment and perform the duties associated with their role increasingly effectively.

Junior faculty's professional competence development through mentoring is defined as a process in which junior faculty actively and progressively enhance their professional competence through undertaking professional tasks, self-assessment and reflection, supported by mentors' guidance, sharing of experience, feedback and assistance.

1.2.5. Managing Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development through Mentoring

1.2.5.1. Management

In this dissertation, management is understood as a purposeful, organised process through which those responsible for management exercise the functions of planning, organising, directing, and monitoring and evaluation to achieve specified objectives under particular conditions.

1.2.5.2. Managing Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development through Mentoring

Junior faculty's professional competence development through mentoring occurs through direct mentor–mentee interaction and is also shaped by how higher education institutions organise, coordinate and support this process.

Within the approach adopted in this thesis, mentoring is regarded as a means of supporting junior faculty's professional competence development that is organised and implemented by the higher education institution. The mentor provides mentoring directly, while junior faculty are both recipients of support and active agents in their own professional competence development through task performance, engagement with feedback, self-assessment and professional reflection.

Drawing on the preceding definitions, managing junior faculty's professional competence development through mentoring is understood as a purposeful, organised process through which those with management responsibilities within a higher education institution exercise the functions of planning, organising, directing, and monitoring and evaluation, while ensuring the necessary conditions for mentoring to be organised and implemented as a means of supporting junior faculty's professional competence development. This process enables junior faculty to progressively meet professional and job-specific requirements more effectively.

1.3. Professional Competence Requirements for Junior Faculty

1.3.1. The Current Higher Education Context

1.3.2. Characteristics of Junior Faculty

1.3.3. Foundations for Identifying Junior Faculty's Professional Competence

Junior faculty's professional competence is identified through a synthesis of research on university faculty competence, professional reference frameworks, legal provisions and practical requirements applicable at the time the framework and survey instruments were developed. These sources are considered in relation to junior faculty's professional responsibilities, characteristics and development needs, with particular attention to foreign language proficiency and digital competence in the context of international integration and digital transformation. On this basis, the study identifies five domains of professional competence. During the finalisation of the dissertation, new legislation and regulations, including the 2025 Law on Teachers and Circular No. 26/2026/TT-BGDĐT, were used to update the framework and assess its alignment with current requirements.

1.3.4. A Professional Competence Framework for Junior Faculty in Higher Education Institutions

Drawing on the characteristics of junior faculty, the higher education context, and relevant scholarly and legal foundations, the dissertation establishes a professional competence framework comprising five mutually supportive domains. Together, these domains reflect the core requirements of university faculty's professional work.

Table 1.2. Professional Competence Framework for Junior Faculty

Professional competence	Description
Subject expertise	The capacity to master and continually update subject knowledge, apply it in teaching, research and addressing problems in professional practice, and help students engage with professional practice and explore career directions.

Professional competence	Description
Pedagogical competence	The capacity to understand learners and teaching contexts, prepare learning materials, design and organise teaching and learning activities aligned with learning outcomes, select and apply appropriate teaching methods and formats, foster an active learning environment, and use assessment and feedback to support learners' development.
Research competence	The capacity to identify research problems, select and apply appropriate research methods, organise the research process, collect and analyse data, write reports, publish and transfer research findings, and participate and collaborate in research activities.
Competence in service to society and the community	The capacity to contribute to the institution, academic units and academic and professional communities, apply subject knowledge to provide advice, support and contributions to society and the community, and establish and participate in collaborative activities with professional organisations, businesses and other stakeholders.
Foreign language proficiency and digital competence in professional activities	This domain comprises two distinct components: (i) <i>Foreign language proficiency</i> : the ability to use foreign languages appropriately to access subject knowledge, engage in academic exchange and research, and participate in professional activities in the context of international integration. (ii) <i>Digital competence</i> : the ability to use digital technologies for professional interaction, access and use digital resources, organise teaching and learning, conduct assessment, support learners and develop their digital competence.

Source: Compiled by the author.

1.3.5. Significance of the Professional Competence Framework for Junior Faculty

The professional competence framework for junior faculty provides a reference for identifying development needs, setting goals, determining the content and forms of development, and monitoring progress. At the individual level, it supports self-assessment, helps junior faculty identify their strengths and areas for further development, and encourages self-directed learning and professional reflection. At the management level, it informs planning, the organisation of mentoring, and the monitoring and evaluation of junior faculty's professional competence development.

1.4. Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development through Mentoring

1.4.1. Importance and Significance of Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development through Mentoring

1.4.2. Principles of Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development through Mentoring

1.4.3. A Theoretical Model of Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development through Mentoring

1.4.4. Goals of Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development through Mentoring

1.4.5. Content of Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development through Mentoring

1.4.6. Forms of Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development through Mentoring

1.4.7. Evaluation of Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development through Mentoring

1.4.8. Conditions Supporting Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development through Mentoring

1.5. Managing Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development through Mentoring in Universities

1.5.1. Foundations for Identifying the Management Components of Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development through Mentoring

1.5.2. Distribution of Management Responsibilities for Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development in Universities

1.5.3. Management Components of Professional Competence Development through Mentoring

Managing junior faculty's professional competence development through mentoring involves five main components:

First, planning: Identify development needs based on the competence framework, job requirements and junior faculty's current competence. Use this assessment to establish development goals, content, mentoring formats, resource requirements, mentor training plans, and monitoring and evaluation procedures.

Second, organising implementation: Translate plans into specific activities, assign mentors, organise training, implement mentoring content and formats, establish learning communities, allocate resources, and develop coordination and oversight mechanisms.

Third, directing implementation: Align support activities with competence development needs, coordinate implementation, guide the flexible use of mentoring formats, monitor progress, and motivate junior faculty to take an active role in their professional development.

Fourth, monitoring and evaluation: Develop criteria and tools, conduct periodic reviews, gather information from stakeholders, monitor implementation and competence development outcomes, and use feedback to adjust management practices.

Fifth, ensuring supporting conditions: Strengthen leadership commitment, develop the mentor workforce, implement incentive policies and mechanisms, and foster a working environment conducive to learning, collaboration and professional development.

1.6. Factors Influencing the Management of Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development through Mentoring in Higher Education Institutions

The management of junior faculty's professional competence development through mentoring is influenced by three main groups of factors:

1.6.1. Organisational Factors

1.6.2. Human Factors

1.6.3. Contextual Factors

These factors interact and influence management processes according to the specific conditions of each higher education institution.

Chapter 1 Summary

Chapter 1 synthesises the theoretical foundations for managing junior faculty's professional competence development through mentoring and identifies a research gap concerning its systematic management in Vietnam.

Building on the definitions of key concepts and an examination of junior faculty's professional requirements, the chapter establishes a professional competence framework

comprising five domains, proposes a theoretical model, and outlines the components of professional competence development through mentoring.

Drawing on human resource development theory and integrating functional and systems approaches to management, the chapter identifies five main management components and three groups of influencing factors: organisational, human and contextual.

These theoretical foundations inform the investigation and assessment of existing practices in Chapter 2 and the management measures proposed in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 2

EMPIRICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR MANAGING JUNIOR FACULTY'S PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH MENTORING IN VIETNAMESE HEIs

Chapter 2 examines the empirical foundations for managing junior faculty's professional competence development through mentoring in higher education institutions. It begins with a review of international experience, followed by an examination of existing practices in the selected institutions.

2.1. International Experience in Managing Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development through Mentoring

2.2. Overview of the Selected Universities Specialising in Economics and Related Disciplines

2.2.1. Foreign Trade University

2.2.2. University of Economics and Business, VNU Hanoi

2.2.3. National Economics University

2.2.4. Thuongmai University

2.2.5. University of Economics, the University of Danang

2.2.6. University of Economics, Hue University

2.2.7. University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City

2.2.8. University of Economics and Law, VNU Ho Chi Minh City

2.3. Design and Implementation of the Empirical Investigation

2.3.1. Purpose

The investigation collects and analyses data on (i) junior faculty's professional competence, (ii) its development through mentoring, and (iii) the management of this process and the factors influencing it in the participating institutions. The findings inform an assessment of existing practices against the theoretical framework established in Chapter 1 and provide an empirical basis for the management measures proposed in Chapter 3.

2.3.2. Areas of Investigation

Guided by the research aim and theoretical framework, the investigation addresses four main areas:

- Junior faculty's professional competence across the domains identified in the research framework. Questionnaire data are complemented by in-depth interview data to clarify competence requirements arising from professional practice.
- Junior faculty's professional competence development through mentoring, focusing on goals, content, formats, monitoring and evaluation, and supporting conditions.
- The management of this development process, covering planning, organising implementation, directing, monitoring and evaluation, and managing supporting

conditions.

- Factors influencing the management of junior faculty's professional competence development through mentoring.

2.3.3. Participants and Research Sites

2.3.3.1. Participants

The investigation of junior faculty's professional competence draws on responses from three groups: administrators, lecturers and students.

The investigation of professional competence development through mentoring and its management draws on responses from administrators, mentors and junior faculty.

The same administrators completed both questionnaires. As the questionnaires addressed different purposes and content, their responses were analysed separately for each area of investigation.

Participants in the semi-structured interviews were selected from four groups: administrators, mentors, junior faculty and students. Their accounts provided further insights into the research issues from perspectives relevant to their respective roles.

2.3.3.2. Research Sites

The investigation was conducted at eight public higher education institutions specialising in economics and related disciplines across northern, central and southern Vietnam:

- Northern Vietnam: Foreign Trade University, National Economics University, University of Economics and Business, VNU Hanoi, and Thuongmai University.
- Central Vietnam: University of Economics, the University of Danang, and University of Economics, Hue University.
- Southern Vietnam: University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City (UEH) and University of Economics and Law, VNU Ho Chi Minh City.

2.3.4. Methods and Instruments

2.3.4.1. Methods

The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data describe patterns and levels of respondents' ratings across the measured areas. Qualitative data complement, clarify and help explain the quantitative findings, while providing insights into aspects for which separate measurement scales were not developed.

Alongside primary data, the study draws selectively on institutional management documents, publicly available reports, reports from relevant organisations and pertinent research to contextualise and support interpretation of the findings.

2.3.4.2. Instruments

The study uses two questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides, designed to reflect the investigation's purpose and content and the information each participant group could provide.

Questionnaire 1: Junior Faculty's Professional Competence

Questionnaire 2: Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development through Mentoring and Its Management

Semi-Structured Interview Guides

2.3.5. Data Collection and Analysis

2.3.5.1. Data Collection

Data were collected between May and December 2023. Primary data were

obtained through questionnaire surveys and semi-structured interviews.

Table 2.1a. Number of Responses to Questionnaire 1

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)	Administrators	Faculty	Students	Total
Foreign Trade University	36	52	44	132
National Economics University	43	53	54	150
University of Economics and Business, VNU, Hanoi	41	37	39	117
Thuongmai University	19	32	28	79
University of Economics, the University of Danang	21	29	31	81
University of Economics, Hue University	15	23	26	64
University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City (UEH)	27	42	55	124
University of Economics and Law, VNU Ho Chi Minh City	26	38	41	105
Total	228	306	318	852

Table 2.1b. Number of Responses to Questionnaire 2

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)	Administrators	Mentors	Junior faculty	Total
Foreign Trade University	36	32	36	104
National Economics University	43	24	39	106
University of Economics and Business, VNU Hanoi	41	20	28	89
Thuongmai University	19	19	30	68
University of Economics, the University of Danang	21	19	28	68
University of Economics, Hue University	15	16	22	53
University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City (UEH)	27	26	35	88
University of Economics and Law, VNU Ho Chi Minh City	26	20	29	75
Total	228	176	247	651

Semi-Structured Interviews

Participants: Purposive sampling identified 41 participants: 8 administrators, 8 mentors, 15 junior faculty and 10 students.

Format: Interviews were conducted in person or online, depending on participants' preferences.

2.3.5.2. Data Analysis

Questionnaire data were checked, coded and analysed using SPSS and Excel. Before analysing existing practices, scale internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. All scales met the required standard (see Appendix 7 of the dissertation).

2.3.6. Assessment Criteria and Interpretation

2.3.6.1. Assessment Criteria

Quantitative items were rated on five-point Likert scales, with scores from 1 to 5 indicating increasing levels of the dimension assessed. Mean scores (M) are reported to two decimal places. Levels and ranks were determined using unrounded means to minimise rounding errors. Standard deviations (SD) indicate the dispersion of ratings around the mean.

2.3.6.2. Interpretation of Scores

To ensure consistent interpretation of descriptive statistics, the score range from 1 to 5 was divided into five intervals. The interval width was calculated as follows:

$$L = \frac{(5-1)}{5} = 0.8$$

Mean scores were interpreted for each dimension as shown below:

Mean score range	Competence / current practice	Implementation of management activities	Outcomes of management activities	Adequacy of supporting conditions	Mean score range
$1,00 \leq \text{DTB} \leq 1,80$	Poor	Low	Poor	Low	None or negligible
$1,80 < \text{DTB} \leq 2,60$	Average	Moderate	Average	Moderate	Moderate
$2,60 < \text{DTB} \leq 3,40$	Fairly good	Fairly high	Fairly good	Fairly high	Fairly strong
$3,40 < \text{DTB} \leq 4,20$	Good	High	Good	High	Strong
$4,20 < \text{DTB} \leq 5,00$	Very good	Very high	Very good	Very high	Very strong

2.4. Junior Faculty's Current Professional Competence

2.4.1. Subject Expertise

2.4.2. Pedagogical Competence

2.4.3. Research Competence

2.4.4. Competence in Service to Society and the Community

2.4.5. Foreign Language Proficiency and Digital Competence in Professional Activities

2.4.6. Summary of Junior Faculty's Professional Competence

The findings indicate uneven professional competence across the domains and components assessed. Among the quantitatively measured areas, service to society and the community and digital competence received the highest mean scores, both rounded to 3.64 and classified as Good. Pedagogical competence followed at 3.42, also classified as Good. Subject expertise scored 3.06 and research competence 2.63, both classified as Fairly good. Research competence received the lowest quantitative rating.

Qualitative findings on foreign language proficiency provide a fuller picture. Junior faculty have begun using foreign languages in professional activities, particularly to read and access subject-specific literature, update their knowledge, find learning

materials and support teaching. Their use of foreign languages for research, specialised academic exchange, research collaboration, writing and publishing internationally was less evident. Although digital competence was rated Good overall, more integrated practices, such as personalising learning, adapting digital resources to learners' needs and using technology to achieve pedagogical goals, received relatively lower ratings. Further development in both areas therefore concerns the capacity to apply these competencies to increasingly demanding professional tasks, beyond access to or basic use of tools.

Overall, participation in institutional and community activities, teaching delivery and the use of digital technology received relatively positive ratings. Research competence, some aspects of subject expertise, preparation for teaching, and the use of foreign languages and technology in more demanding professional tasks require further development.

2.5. Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development through Mentoring in Higher Education Institutions

2.5.1. Development Goals

2.5.2. Development Content

2.5.3. Mentoring Formats

2.5.4. Monitoring and Evaluation

2.5.5. Supporting Conditions

2.5.6. Summary of Professional Competence Development through Mentoring

The findings show that mentoring has been implemented across development goals, content, formats, monitoring and evaluation, and supporting conditions, although implementation remains uneven. Among development goals, subject expertise and pedagogical competence received the highest ratings, while research competence received the lowest. Regarding content, support for subject expertise was rated more positively than support for research and publication, which received the lowest ratings. Continuing professional development, service to society and the community, and connections with professional organisations also received relatively low ratings.

Face-to-face discussion, classroom observation, feedback on teaching and the use of learning materials were rated more positively than support for research projects and collaborative writing and publication. Digital platforms, academic forums and online learning communities were also less prominent. Although mentoring formats were relatively varied, their implementation was uneven. Integration between teaching and research support, and between face-to-face and online mentoring, remained limited.

Monitoring and evaluation relied more heavily on assessments by administrators and mentors, classroom observation, and progress in subject expertise and pedagogical competence. Lower ratings were reported for assessing progress in research and service to society and the community, and for using professional outputs, student and peer feedback, and academic activities as evidence. These findings suggest an uneven use of information sources and evidence to assess junior faculty's progress.

Trust, respect and collaboration within mentoring relationships, together with institutional incentive policies, received more positive ratings than other supporting conditions. However, time allocation was rated Moderate, while resources, tools, funding and mentoring skills training received low ratings. These limitations may leave mentoring heavily dependent on participants' circumstances and initiative.

2.6. Management of Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development through Mentoring

2.6.1. Planning

2.6.2. Organising Implementation

2.6.3. Directing Implementation

2.6.4. Monitoring and Evaluation

2.6.5. Managing Supporting Conditions

2.6.6. Factors Influencing Management

2.6.7. Summary of Management Practices

The findings indicate that management encompasses planning, organising implementation, directing, monitoring and evaluation, and ensuring supporting conditions. However, these components remain unevenly developed. Some activities establishing frameworks, environments and supporting conditions were rated Fairly high, while most specific activities involved in implementing mentoring and supporting competence development were rated Moderate.

In planning, identifying development needs and planning monitoring and evaluation were relatively stronger. Translating needs into specific goals, content, mentoring formats, resources and mentor training plans remained limited. Thus, the basic planning components were present, but their specificity and alignment were insufficient.

In organising implementation, guidance documents, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and organisational conditions received more positive ratings. Mentor training, support mechanisms, learning communities and the selection of mentoring formats suited to actual needs were largely rated Moderate. An initial organisational framework was therefore in place, but activities directly supporting mentoring and its participants were implemented unevenly.

In directing implementation, institutions gave relatively clear attention to fostering learning environments, ensuring supporting conditions and motivating junior faculty. However, direction concerning specific competence domains, particularly research competence, and mentor development was less clearly articulated. Direction was therefore stronger in establishing general conditions than in addressing particular competence domains and individual development needs.

Monitoring and evaluation were largely rated Moderate. Limitations extended across assessment criteria and tools, periodic reviews, technology use, feedback collection and the use of findings to revise plans. Notably, planning and organisational mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation had received Fairly high ratings, whereas their practical implementation was rated Moderate. This suggests weaknesses in systematic monitoring, feedback and the use of evidence.

Supporting conditions were rated Fairly high overall. The working environment, leadership commitment and participation, and mentoring incentive policies received more positive ratings. However, strategies for developing and sustaining the mentor workforce were rated Moderate. Across planning, organising and directing, mentor preparation and competence development consistently emerged as areas requiring attention.

Management was influenced by organisational, human and contextual factors. Accreditation criteria, leadership commitment and direction, training for mentors and

junior faculty, support and recognition mechanisms, international integration and educational cooperation were among the more influential factors. The distribution of management responsibilities, the management competence of faculty and department heads, mentor and junior faculty characteristics, organisational culture, policies and resources were also rated as having a fairly strong influence.

Chapter 2 Summary

Chapter 2 examines junior faculty's professional competence, its development through mentoring and the management of this process in the participating institutions. The findings show that mentoring and its management are established, but implementation is uneven and connections between activities remain weak.

Junior faculty have developed a professional competence foundation, although competence domains and components remain unbalanced. Teaching delivery, service to society and the community, and digital technology use received relatively positive ratings, while research competence was rated lower. Some aspects of subject expertise, teaching preparation and delivery, and assessment require further development. Qualitative findings indicate that foreign languages are used more clearly for reading, accessing literature, updating knowledge and supporting teaching than for research, collaboration, writing, publication and international academic exchange. Digital competence was generally rated positively, although personalised learning, adaptation of digital resources and pedagogically purposeful technology use were less developed.

Mentoring addresses development goals, content, formats, monitoring and evaluation, and supporting conditions, helping junior faculty adapt and fulfil professional responsibilities. Support was more evident in lesson preparation, classroom organisation, observation, professional discussion and feedback. Research, publication, academic foreign language use, advanced digital competence and wider academic and professional networking received less consistent support. Its scope and depth depended substantially on individual mentors' and junior faculty's circumstances, experience and interaction.

The findings suggest that mentors need not be more competent than junior faculty in every domain, particularly in specialised or rapidly changing areas. Their role includes sharing experience, jointly identifying needs and goals, creating opportunities to apply competence, monitoring progress, providing feedback and facilitating access to experts, colleagues, research groups and appropriate resources. Effective mentoring therefore requires mentors' competence and commitment alongside institutional organisation and management.

Institutions have established initial foundations through leadership attention, needs identification, guidance, allocation of responsibilities, supportive environments, and monitoring and evaluation. However, management functions remain insufficiently specified and connected. Translating needs into goals, content, formats, resources and mentor training plans was largely rated Moderate. Guidance documents, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and organisational conditions were more established than mentor training, support arrangements, learning communities and needs-based mentoring formats. Assessment criteria and tools, periodic reviews, technology use, and feedback analysis and application were also largely rated Moderate, indicating

limited systematic use of evidence for adjustment. Working environments, collaborative relationships and incentive policies were relatively positive, but time, resources, tools, funding and mentoring skills training require further attention.

These findings highlight the need to manage mentoring as a goal-directed, systematic mechanism for professional competence development. When support relies mainly on individual pairs' initiative, experience and agreements, outcomes may become fragmented and dependent on mentors' particular strengths. Institutions may also struggle to monitor progress, identify unmet needs and make evidence-informed adjustments.

Management should therefore connect needs identification, goal setting, the organisation and coordination of support, resource mobilisation, monitoring, feedback, evaluation and adjustment. This framework should preserve flexibility within mentoring relationships while ensuring that support remains goal-directed, responsive to junior faculty's needs and adequately resourced.

CHAPTER 3

MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR JUNIOR FACULTY'S PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH MENTORING IN VIETNAMESE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

3.1. Foundations Guiding the Proposed Measures for Managing Junior Faculty's Professional Competence Development (PCD) through Mentoring

3.2. Principles Guiding the Proposed Measures

3.2.1. Ensuring Systematic and Coordinated Management

3.2.2. Ensuring Contextual Relevance, Practicality and Feasibility

3.2.3. Ensuring Flexibility and Personalisation in Managing Competence Development

3.2.4. Promoting an Outcome-Oriented Approach and Sustainable Development

3.2.5. Strengthening Technology Use and Digital Transformation in Management

3.3. Measures for Managing Junior Faculty's PCD through Mentoring

3.3.1. Strengthening Planning for JF's PCD through Mentoring Using a Competence-Based Approach

3.3.2. Organising and Coordinating Mentoring for JF's PCD through Multilevel Coordination

3.3.3. Providing Mentor Training to Improve the Quality of Mentoring for JF's PCD

3.3.4. Establishing and Implementing a Mechanism for Monitoring, Feedback and Evaluation of JF's PCD Outcomes through Mentoring

3.3.5. Ensuring Supporting Conditions and Strengthening Technology Use in JF's PCD through Mentoring

3.4. Relationships among the Proposed Measures

The proposed measures form an integrated system rather than a set of separate interventions. They are closely connected, mutually influential and complementary, reflecting the full logic of a development-oriented management process.

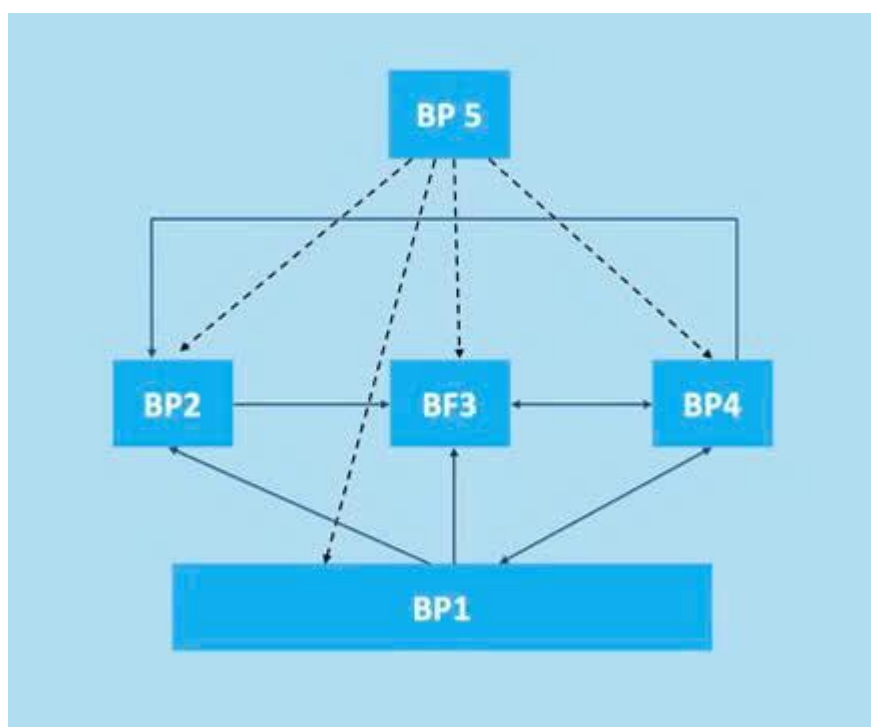


Figure 3.1. Relationships among the Proposed Measures

3.5. Assessment of the Perceived Necessity and Feasibility of the Proposed Measures

3.5.1. Assessment Procedures

The assessment gathered views on the necessity and feasibility of the five proposed management measures, providing additional empirical evidence to inform their review and refinement.

Participants comprised 180 administrators and JF from five public HEIs specialising in economics and related disciplines: Foreign Trade University (55), National Economics University (30), Thuongmai University (25), University of Economics and Business, VNU, Hanoi (35), and Banking Academy (35). Banking Academy was added to broaden the assessment to an institution comparable in type and disciplinary focus to those included in the initial investigation.

Questionnaires were administered in person and online, using three-point scales for necessity and feasibility. Responses were analysed using descriptive statistics, including mean scores and rankings. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient assessed the correspondence between the two sets of rankings.

3.5.2. Assessment Results

All five measures received high ratings for necessity ($M = 2.62 - 2.76$) and feasibility ($M = 2.47 - 2.64$). Measures 1 and 2 ranked highest on both criteria, consistent with the limitations in planning, organisation and coordination identified in Chapter 2.

Spearman's rank correlation coefficient ($\rho = 0.90$) indicated strong correspondence between the necessity and feasibility rankings. As it was calculated from the rankings of only five measures, the coefficient primarily describes consistency between the two assessments. Overall, the findings provide additional empirical support for the perceived necessity and feasibility of the proposed measures.

Table 3.3. Correlation between the Perceived Necessity and Feasibility of the Proposed Measures

No	Measures	NM	NR	FM	FR	RD(d)	d ²
1	Strengthening planning for JF's PCD through mentoring using a competence-based approach	2,76	1	2,64	1	0	0
2	Organising and coordinating mentoring through multilevel coordination	2,72	2	2,61	2	0	0
3	Providing mentor training to improve the quality of mentoring for JF's PCD	2,63	4	2,59	3	1	1
4	Establishing and implementing a mechanism for monitoring, feedback and evaluation of JF's PCD outcomes through mentoring	2,69	3	2,56	4	-1	1
5	Ensuring supporting conditions and strengthening technology use in JF's PCD through mentoring	2,62	5	2,47	5	0	0
Spearman's rank correlation: $\rho = 0.90$							2

Abbreviations: JF = junior faculty, PCD = professional competence development, M = mean, NM = Necessity mean, NR = Necessity rank, FM = Feasibility mean, FR= Feasibility rank, RD= Rank difference

3.6. Pilot Implementation

3.6.1. Rationale for Selecting the Measure

Measure 3, “Providing mentor training to improve the quality of mentoring for Junior Faculty’s PCD”, was selected for pilot implementation. It directly addresses mentor competence, responds to limitations identified in the empirical investigation and can be developed into a training programme for pre–post assessment.

3.6.2. Purpose and Hypothesis

Purpose: To provide an initial assessment of changes in mentors’ self-reported competence in performing their mentoring role and examine the relevance and applicability of the training content.

Hypothesis: Participation in the training programme will improve mentoring competence in three areas: identifying development needs and setting goals, providing feedback and supporting professional development, and applying, monitoring and self-adjusting mentoring practices.

3.6.3. Design

The pilot used a single-group pre -post design without a control group. The same criteria, scoring scale and analytical procedures were used at both time points, complemented by analysis of post-training open-ended feedback. Participants received consistent guidance on interpreting the criteria and completing the assessment to minimise measurement bias.

3.6.4. Participants and Context

The pilot was conducted at Foreign Trade University from 1 to 30 October 2024 with 36 purposively selected mentors. Participants had previous or current experience mentoring junior faculty (JF), relevant professional experience and availability to complete the programme. The university's established faculty development and JF support practices facilitated implementation.

3.6.5. Training Programme

The programme comprised three modules: (i) understanding mentors' roles in supporting JF's PCD, (ii) mentoring skills and methods to support JF's PCD, and (iii) practising and adjusting mentoring activities.

Combining in-person and online delivery, the programme used group discussions, case analysis, simulated practice, experience sharing and reflection. Implementation involved programme preparation, participant selection, pre-training assessment, training delivery, post-training assessment and analysis.

3.6.6. Analysis of Pilot Results

The assessment criteria drew on the theoretical foundations, training objectives and content. They covered the three competence areas specified in the hypothesis, each with five indicators. Participants rated each indicator on a four-point scale coded from 1 to 4. Each area's mean score was divided by 4 and multiplied by its allocated maximum of 3, 4 or 3 points, yielding a maximum total of 10. The 3-4-3 weighting was a study-specific convention. Feedback and professional development support received greater weight because they involve direct, ongoing support.

Scores were classified as Good (8-10), Fairly good (7 - below 8), Average (5 - below 7) and Poor (below 5). The same criteria and scoring procedures were applied before and after training to describe and compare results within the pilot.

Table 3.8. Comparison of Mentors' Competence before and after the Pilot

Competence level	Before the pilot (%)	After the pilot (%)	Difference (percentage points)
Good	5.56%	30.56%	+ 25%
Fairly good	30.56%	58.33%	+ 27,77
Average	50%	11.11%	-38.89
Poor	13.88%	0.0%	-13,88

The distribution of post-training self-assessments shifted towards higher competence levels. More participants rated themselves Good or Fairly good, fewer selected Average, and none selected Poor.

Open-ended feedback from the 36 mentors (Appendix 10) indicated that the programme content and delivery methods were generally relevant to practice. Many reported initial improvements in listening, identifying needs, setting goals, providing feedback and supporting career planning. They also considered the training content applicable to their work.

Application depended on time, workload, the support environment, cooperation from academic units and incentive mechanisms. Participants recommended stronger post-training support and additional content on mentoring in digital environments, interdisciplinary contexts and complex interactions.

Overall, the findings indicate initial improvements in participants' self-assessments and provide further evidence of Measure 3's relevance and potential implementation in comparable settings. However, the short duration, single-institution setting, purposive sampling, absence of a control group and reliance on self-assessment preclude causal conclusions or claims about long-term effects on JF's PC.

Chapter 3 Summary

Chapter 3 proposes an integrated set of measures for managing JF's PCD through mentoring, drawing on the theoretical findings, management practices examined in Chapter 2, higher education reform requirements and the characteristics of JF's PCD.

Guided by the stated principles, the study develops five complementary measures that form a coherent approach to managing development. All five received relatively high ratings for perceived necessity and feasibility.

Measure 3, *Providing mentor training to improve the quality of mentoring for JF's PCD*, was selected for pilot implementation. Pre–post comparisons indicated positive changes in participants' self-assessed mentoring competence. Post-training feedback also showed generally positive views of the programme's content, delivery and practical applicability.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. General Conclusions

The dissertation synthesises the theoretical foundations of JF's PCD through mentoring and its management in HEIs. It establishes a PC framework comprising five domains, explains how competence develops through mentor–mentee interaction, and identifies management components through functional and systems approaches. Mentors need not demonstrate superior competence in every domain. Their role involves providing guidance and feedback and facilitating access to appropriate resources, enabling JF to take an active role in their PCD.

Findings from eight public HEIs specialising in economics and related disciplines reveal uneven development across PC domains and mentoring activities, particularly in research and continuing professional development. Management limitations concern needs-based planning, stakeholder organisation and coordination, mentor training, evidence-informed monitoring, feedback and evaluation, and supporting conditions. Weak connections between management activities constrain the capacity to guide, monitor and adjust JF's PCD.

Drawing on theoretical and empirical findings, the dissertation proposes five complementary management measures addressing planning, organisation and coordination, mentor training, monitoring, feedback and evaluation, and supporting

conditions incorporating technology use. All measures received high ratings for perceived necessity and feasibility. The pilot of Measure 3 involving 36 mentors indicated positive changes in self-assessed mentoring competence and favourable feedback on the programme's relevance and applicability.

The study has several limitations. First, the eight participating institutions were purposively selected, so the findings are primarily informative for institutions with similar characteristics. Second, Measure 3 was piloted over a relatively short period using a single-group pre–post design and relying mainly on self-assessment. Within these limits, the pilot identified positive changes in mentors' self-assessed competence, while participant feedback supported the programme's relevance and applicability. These findings provide meaningful preliminary evidence for further investigation over longer periods, using multiple data sources and more varied settings.

2. Recommendations

2.1. For the Ministry of Education and Training

The Ministry should further develop faculty development policies and encourage mentoring as a means of supporting continuing PCD, while respecting institutional autonomy and circumstances. It should also promote the sharing of models, experience and management tools, with attention to research competence, innovation, foreign language proficiency, digital competence, academic collaboration and professional adaptability.

2.2. For Higher Education Institutions

HEIs should integrate mentoring into faculty development management, specifying goals, responsibilities, coordination mechanisms and implementation conditions. Planning should draw on the PC framework, job requirements and JF's development needs, linking support goals, content and formats to professional tasks, evidence, feedback and adjustment.

HEIs should establish multilevel coordination, select suitable mentors, strengthen mentor training and develop monitoring, feedback and evaluation mechanisms using evidence from multiple sources. They should also provide time, resources and recognition for mentoring contributions, while using technology to support management, reduce unnecessary procedures and sustain the quality of mentor–mentee interaction.

2.3. For Faculties, Departments and Academic Units

Academic units should identify needs, translate plans into specific activities, select mentors and create development opportunities linked to teaching, research and service to society and the community. They should involve additional experts and research groups where necessary, sharing responsibility for support across appropriate contributors. Feedback mechanisms should inform adjustments to mentor–mentee matching, support content and formats, and help foster a collaborative academic environment.

2.4. For Mentors

Mentors should strengthen their capacity to identify needs, set goals, support professional tasks, provide feedback, evaluate progress and adjust support for JF's

development. Recognising that they need not excel in every domain, mentors should facilitate access to relevant expertise and resources, avoid imposing their experience or fostering dependence, and develop JF's capacity for self-assessment, reflection and self-directed professional development.

2.5. For Junior Faculty

JF should actively identify their needs, goals and development pathways and engage with mentors. They should use self-assessment, reflection, evidence and feedback to adjust their development. PCD should encompass subject expertise, pedagogy, research and service to society and the community, with particular attention to foreign language proficiency and digital competence for research, publication, academic collaboration and participation in the international professional community.

2.6. For Future Research

Future studies should include different types of HEIs and disciplinary fields, adopt longitudinal designs, use control groups where appropriate, and combine multiple sources of evidence to assess JF's competence development and the effectiveness of management measures. Further research should examine mentoring mechanisms, mentor - mentee compatibility, support from multiple sources, and the roles of self-assessment, feedback and technology.

The dissertation provides a basis for improving the management of JF's PCD through mentoring in HEIs with comparable characteristics. Its applicability to other contexts requires further investigation and validation.

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