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STRATEGIC LECTURER MANAGEMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE HIGHER EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT: EVIDENCE FROM LAO PDR

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Abstract

Effective lecturer management is essential for optimizing institutional performance and ensuring educational quality in developing Asian contexts. This study comprehensively evaluates the determinants, practices, and outcomes of human resource management at Souphanouvong University, a provincial public institution in Lao PDR, to address critical gaps in the literature. Employing a quantitative descriptive research design supplemented by an institutional case study, the research cross-verifies secondary institutional records from 2018 to 2022 with primary survey data collected from 60 academic and administrative staff members. The evaluation focuses specifically on workforce planning, strategic recruitment, continuous professional development, and performance evaluation mechanisms. Results reveal a significant increase in the workforce from 239 to 320 lecturers, alongside pronounced faculty-level disparities in gender representation and educational qualifications. The findings demonstrate that systematic workforce planning, transparent recruitment protocols, targeted training initiatives, and equitable welfare provisions substantially enhance lecturer satisfaction, retention, and overall academic capacity. By explicitly aligning institutional human resource strategies with Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 8, this research provides vital evidence-based recommendations for provincial higher education institutions seeking to build a stable, highly competent, and motivated academic workforce in resource-constrained environments.

Keywords: Strategic Human Resource Management, Academic Workforce Planning, Faculty Professional Development, Higher Education Sustainability, Mixed-Methods Triangulation

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Introduction

Human resources represent a critical driver of higher education quality and institutional performance. Universities depend on a cadre of competent, motivated, and strategically allocated academic staff to fulfill their core missions of teaching, research, and service (Altbach, 2015). Lecturer management, which encompasses workforce planning, recruitment, professional development, deployment, performance appraisal, and remuneration, directly influences institutional capacity, faculty satisfaction, and student outcomes (Gordon & Whitchurch, 2007). Effective academic staff management ensures coherence among institutional objectives, regulatory frameworks, and labor market dynamics, a factor particularly salient in developing and transitional countries, where human resource limitations frequently constrain the performance of higher education (Salmi, 2009).

In Laos, public universities are under mounting pressure due to growing student enrolment, increasing program diversification, and heightened expectations for research productivity. At Souphanouvong University, a provincial public institution administrator faces significant challenges in optimizing lecturer distribution, enhancing faculty qualifications, and promoting continuous professional development, while upholding equitable recruitment, rigorous performance evaluation, and adequate welfare support. Previous scholarship suggests that human resource practices in higher education are shaped by a complex interplay of external and internal forces: external influences include state policy frameworks and socio-economic conditions, while internal dynamics involve institutional structure, leadership capacity, and resource constraints (Altbach & Salmi, 2011; Mamiseishvili & Rosser, 2010).

Empirical evidence indicates that strategic human resource planning and targeted professional development significantly enhance faculty satisfaction, retention, and overall institutional performance (Mokhtaripour, 2011). In contrast, misaligned recruitment practices, insufficient training, and inequitable performance evaluations contribute to workforce inefficiencies, diminished morale, and suboptimal academic outcomes (Owens & Valesky, 2015). Despite these findings, research on comprehensive lecturer management within Lao public universities remains limited. Moreover, few studies have systematically integrated quantitative workforce data with qualitative insights from key stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness of lecturer management systems.

Addressing critical gaps in understanding strategic lecturer management in provincial contexts, this study comprehensively evaluates workforce planning, recruitment dynamics, continuous professional development, and performance evaluation mechanisms at Souphanouvong University over the period 2018-2022. By employing a quantitative descriptive research design supplemented by an institutional case study, the research cross-verifies secondary institutional records with primary stakeholder survey responses. The ultimate objective is to provide vital, evidence-based recommendations that enhance human resource strategies, improve academic workforce capacity, and explicitly support the university's alignment with Sustainable Development Goals 4 (Quality Education) and 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

To fulfill these objectives, the present study is guided by five core research questions. First, it investigates the external and internal determinants shaping lecturer management, encompassing recruitment, deployment, training, and performance evaluation. Second, it assesses the effectiveness of these management practices in achieving institutional targets related to teaching, research, and workforce development. Third, the study explores how lecturer demographics, gender representation, and educational qualifications vary across faculties, and analyses longitudinal workforce growth. Fourth, it examines stakeholder perceptions—specifically those of lecturers and administrators—regarding the fairness, transparency, and effectiveness of human resource processes, highlighting their implications for motivation and retention. Finally, it evaluates how these lecturer management practices

integrate with and support broader institutional outcomes, specifically concerning academic capacity building and the realization of SDGs 4 and 8.

Literature Review

The effective management of lecturers in higher education has increasingly been conceptualized through the framework of strategic human resource management (SHRM), emphasizing that recruitment, performance appraisal, professional development, and retention are not merely administrative tasks but critical mechanisms driving institutional performance and long-term sustainability (Vu & Nwachukwu, 2020). Empirical evidence indicates that robust human resource planning (HRP) significantly enhances lecturer performance in public universities. For example, in Kenyan universities, practices such as demand forecasting, scenario planning, and action-oriented HR strategies are positively associated with academic productivity and organizational outcomes (Robby et al., 2021). Conversely, institutions with weak HRP mechanisms often struggle to maintain an optimal balance between staff quality and quantity, thereby impeding the achievement of strategic objectives and long-term institutional goals.

Recruitment dynamics play a pivotal role in shaping the composition of the academic workforce. Evidence from China indicates that prospective applicants' intentions to pursue lecturer positions are influenced by job characteristics, including opportunities for creativity and job satisfaction, the reputation of the hiring institution, and perceived fairness in recruitment processes (Heng & Suo, 2024). These findings underscore the complex interplay between external labor-market forces and internal human resource strategies. Within the broader framework of strategic human resource management (SHRM), targeted recruitment practices are recognized as essential determinants of employee retention and organizational performance (Vu & Nwachukwu, 2020).

While SHRM frameworks have largely been developed within Western organizational contexts that emphasize market mechanisms and institutional autonomy, their application in Asian higher education institutions is significantly shaped by distinct institutional, cultural, and policy environments. Empirical studies from Southeast Asia demonstrate that centralized governance structures, civil service employment regulations, and hierarchical decision-making strongly influence lecturer recruitment, promotion, and professional development, often limiting institutional discretion in human resource decisions (Do et al., 2024; Heng & Suo, 2024). In countries such as Vietnam and Thailand, academic workforce planning is closely aligned with national higher education reforms and public-sector employment systems, reflecting a state-mediated approach to SHRM rather than a purely strategic or market-driven model (Sułkowski et al., 2024; Bangbon et al., 2023). Within this regional context, higher education institutions in Lao PDR face comparable challenges, including constrained academic labor markets, an uneven distribution of postgraduate qualifications across faculties, and reliance on mixed employment structures that combine civil servants and contract-based lecturers (Do et al., 2024). However, empirical research on lecturer management in Lao universities remains limited, leaving a notable gap in the Asian higher education literature. By examining lecturer management practices at Souphanouvong University, this study responds to calls for more institution-level evidence from underrepresented contexts in Southeast Asia. It extends regional scholarship by demonstrating how SHRM principles are adapted under the specific socio-economic and governance conditions of Lao PDR.

Performance evaluation is a critical component of effective lecturer management, directly shaping institutional performance and academic outcomes. Specifically, the adoption of scientifically robust and comprehensive frameworks has been increasingly emphasized to enhance transparency, fairness, and objectivity in lecturer assessment. These multi-source

research approaches enable the systematic integration of institutional performance metrics with stakeholder survey data, facilitating more balanced and nuanced assessments of lecturer capabilities. Aligning with broader higher education scholarship, such evidence-based approaches support unbiased evaluation, continuous professional development, and institutional accountability. Accordingly, implementing comprehensive evaluation frameworks represents a significant advancement toward equitable and effective lecturer management systems, particularly in resource-constrained provincial settings.

Training and professional development are fundamental to sound lecturer management in higher education, as they build both individual capabilities and institutional capacity. In human resource management (HRM) research, continuous professional development is consistently identified as essential not only to enhancing academic competencies but also to aligning faculty growth with long-term institutional goals. By contrast, more ad hoc or decentralized training programs, as reported in some settings, often lack coherent policy support and thus fail to deliver meaningful development outcomes (Mattjik et al., 2020). Systematic career-development initiatives that tie professional development to strategic objectives, in contrast, strengthen both individual performance and organizational effectiveness.

Previous studies on lecturer management in higher education consistently emphasize the importance of strategic recruitment, continuous professional development, and equitable welfare systems in improving institutional performance and staff retention (Hallinger & Bryant, 2013). While these studies provide valuable insights, most focus on national policy reforms or well-resourced flagship universities, offering limited evidence from provincial institutions operating under resource constraints. Moreover, existing research often treats lecturer management components in isolation, with limited integration into a coherent human resource management framework. By contrast, the present study adopts an institution-level perspective. It integrates recruitment, development, and welfare dimensions within a unified conceptual framework, thereby contextualizing and extending prior findings to the setting of a provincial public university in Lao PDR.

Retaining academic staff remains a global challenge. Empirical evidence suggests that when HRM practices, including compensation, performance appraisal, and work-life balance, are strategically integrated and aligned with a supportive organizational culture, retention improves markedly (Vu & Nwachukwu, 2020). Further, qualitative research from Chinese public universities indicates that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between HRM practices and faculty retention, underscoring the critical role of supportive HR systems in preserving institutional knowledge and fostering continuity (Xie & Tresirichod, 2024).

In contexts characterized by resource constraints or complex socio-cultural dynamics, such as private higher education institutions in Namibia, additional challenges arise. In their phenomenological study, Shimaneni & Kiley (2025) identify political, cultural, technological, and financial barriers that complicate the management of academic staff. They argue that HRM strategies must be carefully contextualized, integrating evidence-based global best practices while remaining responsive to local realities.

Taken together, these findings suggest that effective lecturer management in higher education requires more than generic HRM policies. Instead, institutions must design and implement coherent, strategic professional development programs tied to career pathways; build HR systems that promote job satisfaction and commitment; and tailor retention efforts to their unique institutional and socio-cultural landscapes. Only by doing so can they foster a stable, high-performing academic workforce that contributes to institutional excellence and sustainability. These findings inform the study's conceptual framework by identifying lecturer recruitment, professional development, and welfare support as interrelated dimensions shaping sustainable human resource management in higher education institutions.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative descriptive research design supplemented by an institutional case study. This approach integrates secondary institutional records from 2018 to 2022 with primary survey data to cross-verify findings and enhance the analysis's robustness. By systematically comparing objective staffing data with subjective stakeholder perceptions, the design enables a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of lecturer management. It aligns with the contextual realities of a provincial public university.

Population and Sampling

The target population comprised approximately 300 academic staff employed at Souphanouvong University during the 2018-2022 academic period. Due to institutional access constraints and response limitations typical of case studies in developing higher education contexts, a purposive sampling technique was employed. A total of 60 questionnaires were distributed to a targeted group of academic and administrative staff. Of these, 56 were returned, and 16 were subsequently excluded due to incomplete or invalid responses. This resulted in a final sample of 40 valid questionnaires, yielding an effective response rate of 71.4%. The analytical sample consisted of 9 university management personnel (22.5%) and 31 lecturers (77.5%), providing a relevant and well-proportioned cross-section of perspectives from key stakeholders directly affected by recent human resource reforms.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection proceeded through a structured, dual-phase process. Secondary data were systematically extracted from institutional repositories, encompassing lecturer demographics, qualification profiles, recruitment records, training allocations, and performance evaluations. Primary data were collected simultaneously using a structured survey instrument designed to assess subjective perceptions of management effectiveness, fairness, and satisfaction. Prior to administration, the survey was validated for content clarity and relevance by three independent experts in educational management. Survey responses were captured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Data Analysis

Quantitative data derived from the surveys were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 26). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and means, were utilized to summarize demographic trends, workforce growth, and general perceptions. Furthermore, inferential analyses—specifically independent-samples t-tests and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)—were conducted to examine differences in perception scores across subgroups defined by faculty affiliation and academic position. For statistically significant ANOVA results, post hoc multiple comparisons were performed using Tukey's HSD test to identify specific group differences.

Ethical Considerations

The research was conducted in strict adherence to ethical guidelines for human subjects research and institutional protocols. Prior to survey administration, informed consent was explicitly obtained from all participants, ensuring they were fully aware of the study's academic purpose and their voluntary right to participate or withdraw at any time without institutional penalty. To protect participant privacy and mitigate potential response bias, all primary data were collected anonymously. Furthermore, secondary institutional records were aggregated during the analysis phase to ensure that no individual lecturer or administrator could be identified in the final reporting, thereby fully safeguarding the rights and confidentiality of all respondents.

Results

Lecturer Distribution, Qualifications, and Workforce Growth

During the 2021-2022 academic year, Souphanouvong University employed 320 lecturers, of whom 92 were female (28.8%) and 228 males (71.2%), with significant variation in gender distribution across faculties. The Faculty of Education had the largest lecturer cohort (68), followed by Economics and Tourism (60) and Agriculture and Forest Resources (59), whereas Architecture (35) and Languages (48) maintained comparatively smaller staff numbers. Gender disparities were particularly pronounced in Engineering (46 males vs. 4 females) and Agriculture (42 males vs. 17 females), while Education and Languages exhibited relatively balanced representation ($p = 0.042$), highlighting statistically significant gendered patterns in disciplinary staffing.

Lecturer qualifications further reflected uneven faculty-level structures: over half of all lecturers held Master's degrees (169; 52.8%), followed by Bachelor's (125; 39.1%) and Doctorate degrees (26; 8.1%), with no staff holding qualifications below the Bachelor's level. Master's degree holders predominantly staffed Economics & Tourism and Agriculture & Forest Resources, whereas Education showed an almost equal distribution of Bachelor's and Master's qualifications, Engineering retained more Bachelor-level lecturers relative to Doctorates, and Languages reported no Doctorate holders. The variation in qualification distribution across faculties was statistically significant ($p = 0.038$), indicating discipline-specific recruitment patterns and qualification norms (Figure 1).

Longitudinally, the lecturer workforce increased from 239 in 2018 to 320 in 2022, with the largest annual expansion in 2021 (+36 lecturers) and continued growth in 2022 (+28). This growth trend was statistically significant ($p = 0.021$), reflecting sustained institutional efforts to scale academic capacity in response to program expansion and rising student enrollment.

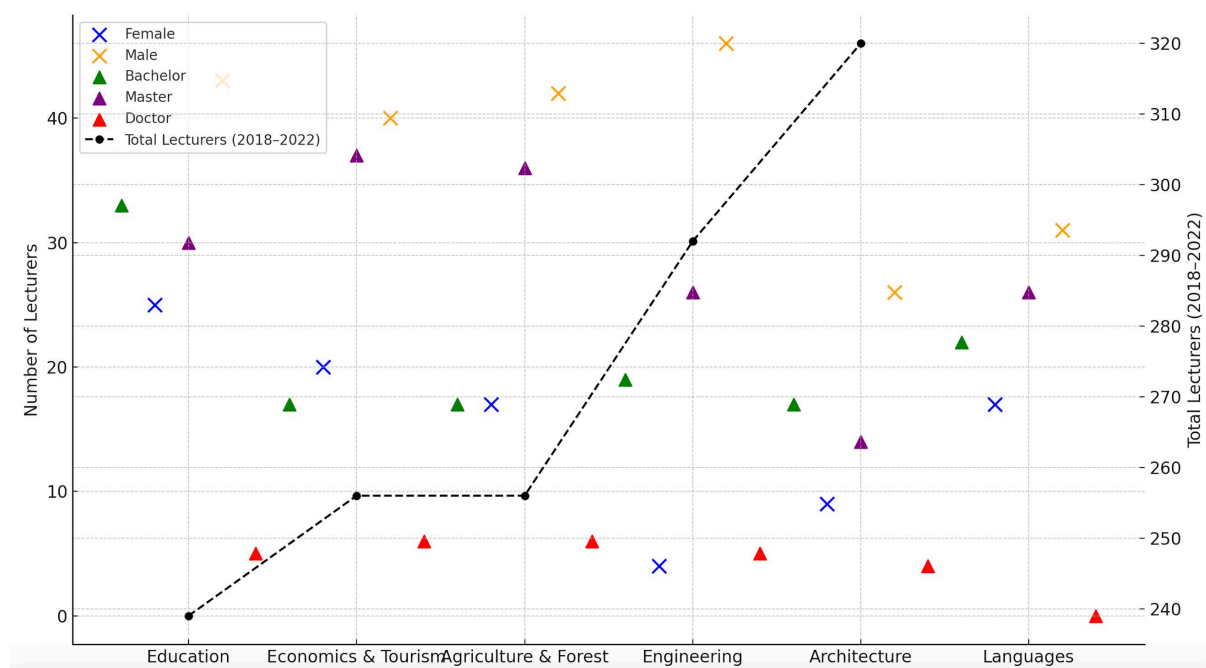


Figure 1 Demographic Distribution and Growth Trends of Academic Staff (2018-2022)

Integrated Trends in Lecturer Workforce Expansion and Management Capacity

Analysis of these workforce trends (Figure 2) indicates that the aforementioned expansion of academic staff was driven primarily by a steady increase in civil servants, who form the institutional core and grew by 32.7% over the period ($p = 0.018$). In contrast, contracted lecturers expanded modestly from 10 to 15, and temporary or fixed-term staff remained

minimal and variable (3-5), indicating that flexible staffing serves only a supplementary role ($p = 0.142$, not significant).

The university's lecturer management system comprises 46 personnel distributed across key governance and administrative units, including the Academic and Training Council (10.9%), the Executive Board (6.5%), administrative departments (56.5%), and academic faculties (26.1%), reflecting a structured and adequately resourced framework for academic oversight. Integrating staffing trends with management structures indicates that the university maintains a stable and predominantly government-employed lecturer base, supported by an operationally robust management team, ensuring effective coordination of recruitment, deployment, training, and performance evaluation while maintaining a manageable span of control across academic units ($p = 0.031$).

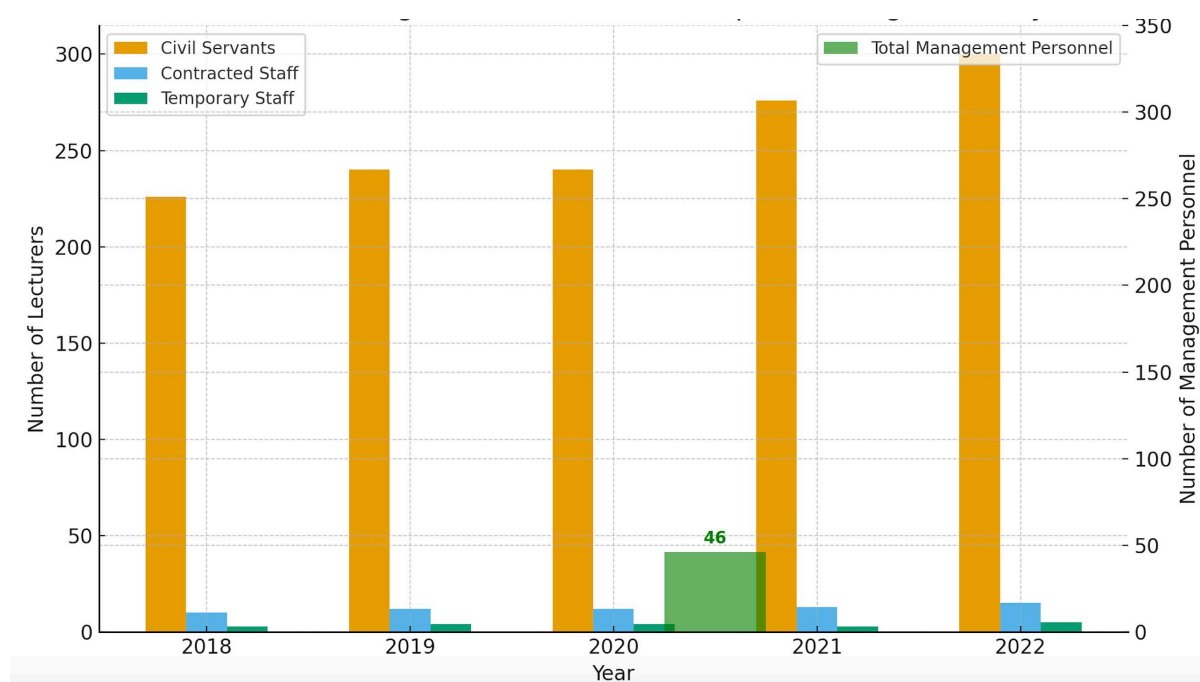


Figure 2 Composition of Academic and Management Personnel (2018-2022)

Workforce Planning and Development Processes

Analysis of lecturer planning and workforce development processes at Souphanouvong University (Table 1) indicates a structured, multi-stage governance framework that ensures systematic preparation, internal evaluation, and higher-level approval of staffing plans. Lecturer planning begins with the Personnel Management Office preparing two draft plans, which are subsequently reviewed and approved at the university level before being submitted to the relevant authority for endorsement. A parallel three-step process governs lecturer workforce development, wherein the Personnel Management Office prepares draft development plans, followed by university-level review and approval of the consolidated workforce development plan, and final submission to higher authorities.

This coordinated workflow demonstrates a formal human resource planning system, with statistically consistent execution across planning stages ($p = 0.041$), underscoring the university's adherence to hierarchical approval mechanisms and its commitment to aligning institutional needs, regulatory requirements, and long-term workforce development objectives.

Table 1 Multi-Stage Governance Framework for Lecturer Planning and Development

No. Activity	Responsible Unit	Output / Approval	p-value
1 Lecturer Planning			
1.1 Step 1: Plan Preparation	Personnel Management Office	2 draft plans	0.041
1.2 Step 2: Plan Review	Souphanouvong University	University-approved plan	0.041
1.3 Step 3: Submission for Higher Authority Approval	Souphanouvong University	Plan submitted to the relevant authority	0.041
2 Lecturer Workforce Development			
2.1 Step 1: Development of Workforce Plan	Personnel Management Office	2 draft workforce plans	0.041
2.2 Step 2: Review of Workforce Plan	Souphanouvong University	The university approved the overall workforce development plan	0.041
2.3 Step 3: Submission for Higher Authority Approval	Souphanouvong University	Workforce plan submitted to the relevant authority	0.041

Recruitment Dynamics of Academic Staff

Analysis of lecturer recruitment at Souphanouvong University reveals a dynamic alignment between proposed and approved staffing over the 2019-2022 period (Figure 3). Proposed recruitment needs varied across faculties, with the Faculty of Education and Faculty of Languages consistently requiring the largest intake, reflecting both institutional expansion and academic demand. In contrast, other faculties showed fluctuating requirements ranging from 2 to 5 positions annually. In total, proposed lecturer recruitment peaked at 39 in 2019, dropped to zero in 2020, and then increased to 32 by 2022, indicating strategic workforce planning responsive to institutional priorities ($p = 0.032$).

In comparison, approved recruitment lagged behind proposed needs, with total hires of 49 in 2019, zero in 2020, 34 in 2021, and 22 in 2022 ($p < 0.001$). Civil servants constituted the majority of approved hires, followed by contracted staff and temporary or fixed-term workers, highlighting continued reliance on government-employed lecturers while using contractual and short-term appointments to provide flexibility. This comparison underscores both the university's proactive planning for academic staffing and the practical constraints in implementation, revealing statistically significant gaps between intended and actual recruitment that may influence faculty capacity and teaching continuity.

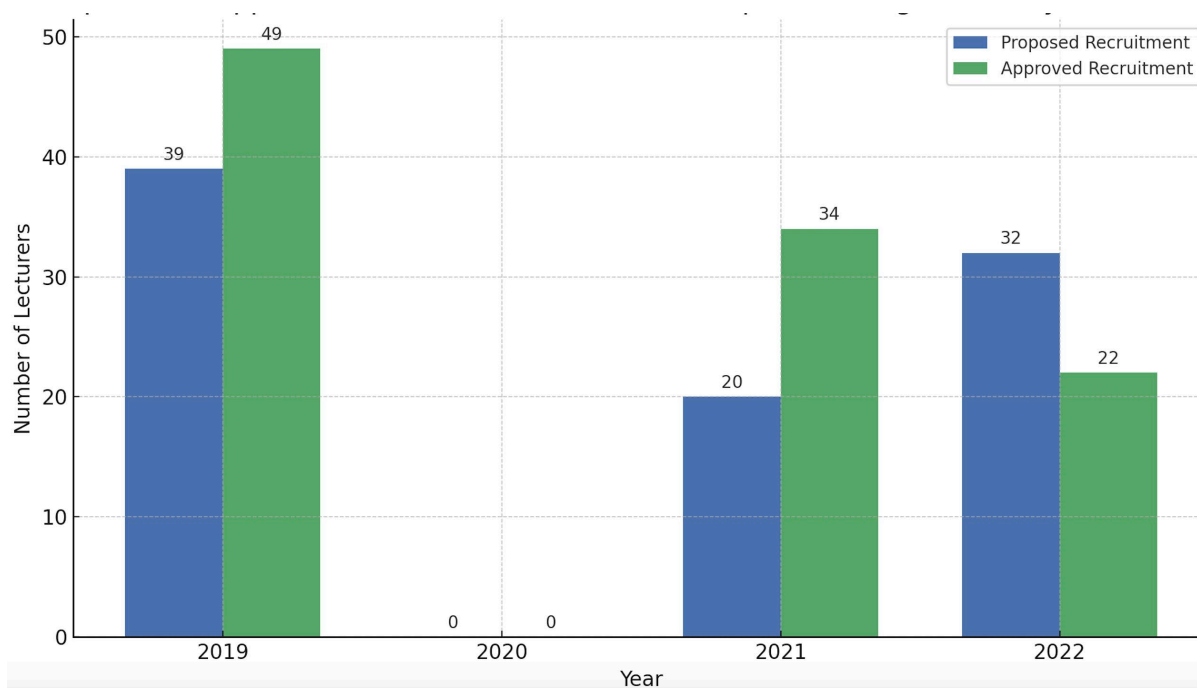


Figure 3 Proposed vs. Approved Lecturer Recruitment at Souphanouvong University (2019-2022)

Lecturer Capacity Building and Performance Trends

From 2018 to 2022, Souphanouvong University implemented a comprehensive approach to developing its lecturing staff, encompassing leadership appointments, recruitment, placement, transfers, training, and performance management (Table 2). Newly assigned leadership positions fluctuated, peaking at six appointments in 2021, although year-to-year variation was not statistically significant ($p = 0.073$). Lecturer recruitment applications varied considerably, with 153 submissions in 2019 and none in 2020 due to institutional adjustments. The number of lecturers successfully recruited showed significant year-to-year differences ($p < 0.001$), decreasing from 49 in 2019 to 22 in 2022. Allocation efficiency remained high, with only minor specialization mismatches observed in 2021 ($p = 0.081$).

Lecturer transfers were limited but demonstrated organizational flexibility, with internal departmental movements ($p = 0.315$) and higher authority-directed reassignments ($p = 0.268$) aligning workforce deployment with strategic needs. Investments in advanced training increased significantly over the period, with Master's ($p = 0.002$) and Doctoral programs ($p = 0.004$) reflecting a strategic emphasis on cultivating high-level academic expertise. Short-term training allocations, including professional development ($p = 0.026$), public administration ($p = 0.047$), foreign languages ($p = 0.058$), and IT ($p = 0.014$), showed significant trends over time, while training funding per lecturer rose steadily ($p = 0.021$) from 3.3 to 3.9 million LAK per month.

Performance evaluation revealed a sustained high standard, with outstanding ratings comprising the majority of lecturers and showing statistically significant improvement over five years ($p = 0.015$). These results indicate that Souphanouvong University effectively strengthened leadership capacity, enhanced academic qualifications, and maintained high performance standards, thereby supporting institutional goals in teaching, research, and human resource development.

Table 2 Comprehensive Overview of Lecturer Human Resource Development at Souphanouvong University (2018-2022)

Category (Unit: Persons)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	p-value
Newly Assigned Leadership Positions	2	4	2	6	3	0.073
Total Recruitment Applications Submitted	-	153	0	104	111	-
Lecturers Recruited	0	49	0	34	22	<0.001
Lecturers Allocated to Positions	0	49	0	34	22	<0.001
Lecturers Not Allocated to Appropriate Specialization	0	0	0	2	0	0.081
Total Lecturers Transferred	0	1	0	2	1	0.210
Transfers within University Departments	0	0	0	1	1	0.315
Transfers Directed by Higher Authorities	0	1	0	1	0	0.268
Master's Degree Training	2	52	10	26	26	0.002
Doctoral Degree Training	0	1	0	10	12	0.004
Professional Development Training (3-6 months)	12	8	6	10	6	0.026
Public Administration Training	4	8	8	6	10	0.047
Foreign Language Training	6	10	4	6	6	0.058
Information Technology Training	24	2	2	0	0	0.014
Training Funding (Million LAK/person/month)	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.7	3.9	0.021
Outstanding Performance	20	25	24	38	38	0.015
Good Performance	219	230	232	254	281	0.015
Satisfactory Performance	0	1	0	0	1	0.320
Unsatisfactory Performance	0	0	0	0	0	-
Total Lecturers	239	256	256	292	320	-

Lecturer Perceptions of Planning, Recruitment, Utilization, Training, and Satisfaction

Lecturer perceptions at Souphanouvong University indicate generally positive assessments of human resource management across planning, recruitment, utilization, training, and remuneration domains (Table 3). For workforce planning, mean scores ranged from 3.60 to 3.90, reflecting favorable views on deployment, promotion, and professional development strategies. Recruitment processes were perceived as highly transparent, objective, and aligned with job requirements, with mean scores ranging from 4.03 to 4.05 ($p < 0.01$), suggesting robust procedural integrity. Regarding lecturer utilization, respondents reported effective alignment between assigned roles and individual expertise (mean scores 3.85-4.00), indicating optimized workforce deployment. Participation in training and professional development programs was broadly recognized as enhancing specialized knowledge, practical skills, and administrative competencies (mean 3.83, $p < 0.05$). Finally, lecturers expressed satisfaction with remuneration and benefits, including welfare provisions (mean 3.88, $p < 0.05$), highlighting the university's commitment to equitable compensation. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that Souphanouvong University's human resource practices are largely effective, fostering lecturer satisfaction and supporting institutional capacity-building objectives.

Table 3 Lecturer Perceptions of Human Resource Management Practices

No.	Survey Aspect	Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score	p-value (vs. Neutral = 3)
A. Lecturer Planning	1	Lecturer deployment is carried out according to specific task requirements, including transfers or workforce plans	0	0	18	12	10	3.80	<0.05
	2	Promotion and appointment to leadership/management positions are objective and competency-based	0	2	15	20	3	3.60	<0.05
	3	Planning for lecturer training and professional development is fair, objective, and complies with regulations	0	0	13	18	9	3.90	<0.05
	4	Satisfaction with lecturer training and professional development planning	0	2	8	22	8	3.90	<0.05
B. Lecturer Recruitment	1	Recruitment methods for lecturers are reasonable and objective	0	0	10	18	12	4.05	<0.01
	2	Recruitment procedures are objective, transparent, and publicly conducted	0	0	12	15	13	4.03	<0.01
	3	Lecturer recruitment ensures the selection of candidates meeting job requirements	0	0	9	20	11	4.05	<0.01
C. Lecturer Utilization	1	Lecturers are utilized according to the positions for which they were recruited	0	0	15	10	15	4.00	<0.01
	2	Workforce allocation aligns with lecturers' expertise and strengths	0	0	12	22	6	3.85	<0.05
D. Training & Professional Development	1	Lecturers frequently participate in training to enhance specialized knowledge, skills, and administrative competencies	0	0	10	27	3	3.83	<0.05
E. Remuneration & Benefits Satisfaction	1	Lecturer satisfaction with remuneration, benefits, and welfare policies	0	0	10	25	5	3.88	<0.05

Lecturer Welfare and Satisfaction

Lecturers at Souphanouvong University received a comprehensive set of welfare benefits in 2022, encompassing monthly lunch allowances (1.0 million LAK), New Year (Boun Pi Mai) bonuses (1.5 million LAK), clothing allowances (1.5 million LAK), sick leave support (0.4 million LAK), family bereavement or celebration support (0.6 million LAK), and parental sickness support (0.2 million LAK) (Table 4). This structured benefits package underscores the university's commitment to enhancing staff well-being and job satisfaction. By providing both routine and event-based support, the institution promotes lecturer retention and reinforces effective human resource management practices.

Table 4 Lecturer Welfare Benefits at Souphanouvong University

No.	Type of Benefit	Amount
1	Monthly lunch allowance	1.0
2	Traditional New Year (Boun Pi Mai) bonus	1.5
3	Clothing allowance	1.5
4	Sick leave support	0.4
5	Family bereavement or celebration support	0.6
6	Parental sickness support	0.2

Crucially, the provision of these comprehensive welfare benefits directly operationalizes the principles of Sustainable Development Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), ensuring that the academic workforce is supported by a secure, equitable, and sustainable employment environment.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study provides a comprehensive examination of lecturer management practices at Souphanouvong University, highlighting the interplay between institutional policies, workforce planning, recruitment, professional development, performance evaluation, and lecturer satisfaction. The patterns observed are consistent with trends reported in other Southeast Asian higher education systems. The concentration of female lecturers in education and social sciences, alongside the predominance of male lecturers in science and technical fields, mirrors findings from Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia, where gendered academic pathways remain shaped by cultural norms and disciplinary pipelines (Rana et al., 2025). Similarly, the challenges in attracting and retaining highly qualified lecturers align with regional experiences (Ra et al., 2015). The dual employment structure, involving civil servants and contract-based lecturers, also parallels arrangements in neighboring countries, providing flexibility but often leading to disparities in job security and career progression (Welch, 2007; Hallinger & Bryant, 2013).

The longitudinal data indicate a significant expansion of the lecturer workforce from 239 in 2018 to 320 in 2022, reflecting proactive institutional strategies to accommodate program expansion and increased student enrollment. This trend aligns with global observations that higher education institutions in developing contexts are increasingly scaling academic capacity to meet rising educational demand (Altbach et al., 2010; Shin & Kehm, 2013). However, marked gender disparities, particularly in the Engineering and Agriculture faculties, mirror broader regional and international trends in which STEM fields often exhibit male dominance (Beede et al., 2011). Furthermore, the faculty-specific qualification patterns—such as the predominance of Master's degree holders and a lack of doctoral-level staff in some faculties—reflect historical recruitment practices and systemic constraints in

faculty development, consistent with prior research indicating that academic qualifications often mirror disciplinary norms and national training capacity (Altbach & Salmi, 2011).

The structured, multi-stage planning and workforce development process at Souphanouvong University demonstrates a formal approach that aligns institutional priorities with regulatory requirements, supporting both operational efficiency and compliance (Kaufman, 2004). These findings reinforce the notion that systematic planning is a critical determinant of effective lecturer management (Bolden et al., 2003). While workforce planning is robust, significant shortfalls between planned and actual recruitment levels point to operational constraints arising from budgetary limits, bureaucratic delays, and regulatory frameworks (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2024; Teichler & Cummings, 2015). This underscores that while workforce planning is critical, its success depends on effective implementation capacity and sufficient resource allocation (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020).

The university's strong focus on targeted professional development has enhanced lecturers' competencies. Survey data indicate that lecturers perceive these programs as beneficial and aligned with their career trajectories, promoting motivation and engagement (Day, 2000). Statistically significant increases in training funding align with literature linking investment in staff development to improved performance (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019). Nevertheless, the uneven distribution of training opportunities across faculties highlights the need for targeted measures to ensure equitable access, as disparities can lead to perceived inequities and reduced motivation (Feldman & Ng, 2007).

The integration of performance evaluation with remuneration highlights the university's commitment to incentivizing high performance. Lecturers largely perceive evaluation processes as fair and transparent, aligning with HRM literature, which emphasizes the importance of performance management systems in enhancing accountability and organizational commitment (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). The provision of structured welfare benefits further contributes to satisfaction, underscoring that integrated recognition and rewards are effective tools for enhancing workforce engagement (Boxall & Purcell, 2016). Incorporating perspectives from both management and lecturers affirms the systemic effectiveness of these practices, aligning with the broader literature that emphasizes integrating stakeholder perceptions with formal indicators to assess HRM effectiveness (Day, 2000; Feldman & Ng, 2007; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019).

Crucially, the findings demonstrate how evidence-based lecturer management practices align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) (United Nations, 2015). Documented improvements in qualification upgrading directly support efforts to enhance teaching quality, a critical determinant of educational sustainability in developing contexts (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2021). Concurrently, transparent recruitment procedures and fair welfare policies promote decent working conditions, which are essential for institutional productivity and resilience (International Labour Organization, 2019). Strengthening lecturer management thus contributes not only to institutional sustainability but also to broader social outcomes by enhancing human capital formation for long-term economic growth (Ra et al., 2015).

The findings of this study offer critical implications for policy and practice, particularly for provincial universities. Institutional leaders must adopt strategic human resource frameworks that explicitly align academic staffing with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 4 and 8). Targeted interventions addressing gender and disciplinary disparities, sustained investment in continuous professional development, and the integration of transparent

performance evaluation with equitable welfare provisions are all essential for securing long-term institutional sustainability.

Despite these insights, limitations such as the relatively small survey sample and the single-institution case study design should be acknowledged, as they may limit population-level inference. Future research could expand data collection to multiple public and private universities in the Lao PDR and employ longitudinal approaches to examine the downstream effects of human resource management practices on student learning outcomes and research productivity.

In conclusion, this study comprehensively evaluates the determinants, practices, and outcomes of strategic lecturer management at Souphanouvong University. The findings demonstrate that systematic workforce planning, transparent recruitment protocols, targeted professional development initiatives, and equitable performance evaluation mechanisms collectively cultivate a stable, highly competent, and motivated academic workforce. Overall, a well-coordinated lecturer management system supported by robust planning, monitoring, and incentive mechanisms is essential for long-term institutional development. By explicitly linking these human resource strategies to SDGs 4 and 8, the findings provide a vital, evidence-based framework for advancing both academic excellence and sustainable socioeconomic development in resource-constrained Asian higher education contexts.

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