

Improving the Vietnamese Academic Research Quality at People's Police Academies and Universities in the Present Period

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Abstract

Improving training quality at universities, in general, and at police academies, in particular, has always been associated with quality of scientific research. This largely depends on the academic research quality, which plays a decisive role in the fundamental and comprehensive education renewal and especially in people's police education and training. Lecturers at People's Police Academies and Universities, besides having favorable conditions in their process of scientific research, have confronted a lot of difficulties. This article is an attempt to deal with special features of scientific research at those institutions, discuss measures in order to improve research quality, and promote academics' research activities at people's police institutions in the present period. Mixed methods were used as the data collection for this research, through questionnaires and in-depth interviews, to clarify and explain the initial findings and suggested solutions.

Keywords: research quality; lecturers; people's police academies and universities; national security.

1. Introduction

From international perspective, scientific research and management of scientific research played an important role in higher education institutions [3]. Management has currently become an activity happening in all aspects and relating to all people; it is a science, an art and profession in modern society [F. Taylor, Harold Koont, Mary Parker Pollet]. In particular, instruction and scientific research are parallel and dialectical tasks of the lecturers. In foreign universities, scientific research was also defined as a profession and to meet social changes and challenges in the educational environment.

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Universities have to adapt themselves to current changeable context in terms of renewing scientific research management; closely coordinating between training and scientific research and seeking funding sources for scientific researches. In Vietnam, the Communist Party stated: “Developing and *Improving the quality of human resource, especially of skillful human resource is one of the factors determining the nation’s fast development and country’s viability*” [11]. According to this, people’s police institutes and universities are both strong training and research police institutions. They are implementing fundamental renovations so as to “*Train and supply enough qualified human resource with good virtue, high capability, strong competence of politics, profession, and knowledge of law...*” [9]. Developing a highly skilled human resource is necessary for a country in the process of globalization and development. To contribute to such comprehensive educational and training innovations in people’s police, training highly qualified human resource to supply leaders and commanders-in-chiefs together with encouraging lecturers’ research activities played an especially important role in building up a system of textbooks, teaching materials to raise teaching quality to meet the actual needs of police tasks set forth. Management of scientific research at universities is a systematic impact with specific purposes from management subjects to different units at universities in order to improve the quality of scientific research activities to meet the given goals. Scientific research management includes research planning, implementation, leadership, and evaluation to ensure that research activities are in line with the set goals. The survey about research situation and its management was conducted at four Vietnamese people’s police academies and universities, including People’s Security Academy (T31), People’s Police Academy (T32), University of Fire Fighting and Prevention (T34) and People’s Police University of Technology and Logistics (T36), from June 2011 to March 2016, with four objects: 460 lecturers, 49 heads of departments and courses; 4 university presidents/vice presidents [12].

2. Research contents

2.1. Characteristics of scientific research by lecturers of people’s police academies and universities

Lecturers at police institutions are required to carry out two tasks: teaching and researching. These two tasks are dialectically related with and support each other. Through actual teaching, there have been issues related to professional reasoning which must be added to and perfect by scientific research and actual professional work. The police researching activities are closely associated with withdrawing lessons from actual work. This will contribute to diversifying, improving, completing and updating the system of textbooks for police professional reasoning.

- Lecturers at people’s police academies and universities are those police cadres in the army force that have to execute full regulations of police cadre’s management.

Besides the common characteristics of the teaching staff at universities in general, academics at people’s police institutions are those police cadres in the armed force that have to well abide by rules and regulations of police, be always ready to execute police orders and political tasks. Together with the assigned time fund of teaching, police lecturers must spend time fund on doing research work depending on their teaching titles [6]. Those who are Party members, are not only lecturers to transfer knowledge, but also soldiers at the fronts of thought and

reasoning. They are equipped with Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh ideology, and political orientation in order to contribute to training and building up their learners' strong base of political orientation.

- The lecturers' scientific research is associated with raising their teaching quality.

Implementing scientific projects at people's police institutions is often a popular and important activity, which helps perfect professional reasoning, in particular and in the police, in general. With its special characteristics seen as national secrets, the police professional reasoning does not inherit research findings compared to other fields of science. So, to build up its own system of textbooks, the only way is to do research and carry out projects. Lecturers at people's police institutions cannot be able to teach well without doing research and regular field work. The situational method was usually used in its specific professions and police need to include new, diversified and actual professional fighting situations. Actually, the application of project results in teaching is an important factor to improve teaching quality and to renew police profession.

- Academic content of scientific research at police institutions was closely linked with teaching practices, summary of movement and development of struggles to crime fighting, to serve the cause of national defense, and ensure social order and safety.

Implementing scientific projects, withdrawing lessons from actual fighting against crimes, and solving problems related to reasoning and the reality of police profession are special features of the police force. So, it is crucial to improve training quality, focus on research content towards renovations to achieve perfect educational aims and complete educational content, system of textbooks and teaching methodology, etc. There have been institutional projects coordinated by academics which are closely related to teaching majors, building up as well as completing the instruction reasoning, and aiming to solve problems arising from the teaching content, theoretical reasoning based on actual struggles. Such projects have helped provide good systems of textbooks and test banks. Research activities at people's police institutions also aim to deal with issues of reasoning, national defence, and insurance of social order and safety. They have contributed to the accomplishment of police profession such as the systems of concepts, notions, and key terms that must be set up and clarified in the awareness and actions of the whole police force. At the same time, scientific research needs to build up sound scientific arguments, which recommend intents together with solutions to ensure national defence and social order and safety; thus, building up the formal elite police armed force, and step by step modernizing it. Research also needs to apply scientific and highly technological achievements to police work to increase police fighting efficiency.

- Academic scientific research does not aim at taking economic benefit and being done on a smaller scale.

Scientific and technological research in the police field is quite different from those in other fields in that economic benefits are not the direct focus. There is no business, no regain of capital, and especially without project bidding activities. The research work at police institutions directly contributes to the making up of professional reasoning and serving of national defence and social order and safety because of its 1st prior political goal. Conditions for carrying out research are on small scale because of other factors such as limited

information and materials. As far as the technological projects, there have been insufficient conditions for experiments and the results are only applied in limited in-depth disciplines... Especially, budgets from the Ministry of Public Security are so limited; these police institutions are not allowed to self manage their finance. The budgets for projects are given at fixed installments with procedures of setting up finance clearance in the end.

- Confidential factors are ensured and seriously followed in researching as well as managing scientific research at police academies and universities.

Research activities, in general, and projects implemented by lecturers, in particular, mostly fall in the secret category; then process of carrying out research, using materials and facilities must comply with a secret process. The results, especially those related to the police profession, are not allowed to be published in the outside-police mass media if they have not yet been permitted by the competent agencies. The research findings at police academies are implemented, stored, and exploited towards regulations for confidential documents. The scientific projects need to be in confidential circle from their registration, implementation, judgement, acceptance, and application.

2.2. Situations of academic research activities at police academies and universities

2.2.1. Advantages and difficulties encountered by lecturers in scientific research

- Advantages

Police academies and universities, immediately after assigned with tertiary training, were well aware of the role and importance in scientific research, in general, and in their lecturers' research, in particular. Lecturers must do research for a certain number of hours yearly and their research has to support teaching so as to improve teaching quality. These people's police higher education institutions created potential favorable conditions for lecturers to eagerly carry out research, contributing greatly to the cause of training. Up to now, most of the subjects have their standard textbooks and materials according to set regulations. Hundreds of monographs have been compiled, thus backing the police's professional reasoning and serving teaching performance efficiently [8]. Many lecturers from faculties and departments in those institutions have been invited by local units to get involved in projects at National and Ministerial levels as well as police profession meetings. In the past 5 years (2010-2015), the total number of approved projects was 583, and the number of projects led by lecturers was about 552, focusing on lecturers with master and doctoral degrees. Lecturers with bachelor degree only participated in these topics. According to the survey results, 100% of the grassroots project managers were lecturers with teaching experience of 5 years or more. Thus, the topic registration focused on senior lecturers with research experience.

Table 1: Number of research projects at police institutional level in period 2010-2015

Academi es/ Universit ies	Academic year	Project information			Accepted level			
		Registere d	Approve d	Accept ed	Excellent	Good	Satisfie d	Not satisfied
T31	2010-2011	12	12	7	7	0	0	0
	2011-2012	17	5	7	6	1	0	0
	2012-2013	10	10	7	3	7	0	
	2013-2014	17	9	2	1	1	0	
	2014-2015	49	49	6	5	1	0	
T32	2010-2011	94	94	14	14	0	0	0
	2011-2012	85	85	25	22	2	1	0
	2012-2013	95	95	26	24	2	0	
	2013-2014	96	91	36	33	3	0	
	2014-2015	60	52	19	16	3	0	
T34	2010-2011	4	4	0	0	0	0	0
	2011-2012	11	7	5	2	3	0	0
	2012-2013	14	14	2	1	1	0	
	2013-2014	14	5	4	0	4	0	
	2014-2015	15	3	1	1	0	0	
T36	2010-2011	9	6	1	0	1	0	0
	2011-2012	18	13	3	2	1	0	0
	2012-2013	16	16	9	8	1	0	
	2013-2014	9	9	3	3	0	0	
	2014-2015	16	4	4	0	4	0	
Total		661	583	151	148	38	1	

(Source: X14 Division on Training - Ministry of Public Security (MPS))

In general, the overall research needs of police lecturers have not been met. The average number of approved institutional projects was very low such as in T31, with funding from MPS; comparing with hundreds of lecturers, only 10 to 12 projects were approved. Meanwhile, the crucial rule was that lecturers needed to improve their titles. Researching projects and summarizing practical struggles were the only ways for them to improve police professional teaching. Training activities in an academic year were closely linked with doing scientific work. A prominent point in recent researches was that such activities have been associated with actual fieldwork of local units, linking with innovative ideas to improve teaching practice, taking part in projects to solve practical issues, and to simultaneously respond to the task of educational development in the police force as well.

- Difficulties

Project selection was limited due to shortage of connective ties among practical units. At present, there has not been a mechanism of coordinating and sharing information among lecturers and those at practical units and others within the police system. Lecturers' topics selection was without panorama vision, especially in the context of quickly social change and of big gaps in the police professional reasoning. Leaders' attention and direction at academies and universities were shown in the following contents:1/ Improving role of department/course division; 2/ Closely connecting division of scientific research and management with other departments/division; 3/ Leading and cooperating functional units within university/academy; 4/Improving role of local units; and 5/Cooperating with police at local areas to support project implementation.

Table 2: Levels of cooperation among units in carrying out researches

Contents	Lecturers	Staff	University/ac ademy Presidents	Head of departments	Mean	Order
1. Improving role of department/course division	3.34	2.93	3.25	3.46	3.32	1
2. Closely connecting division of scientific research and management with other departments/division	2.65	3.19	3.50	2.97	2.73	2
3. Leading and cooperating functional units within university/academy	2.18	2.36	3.00	3.59	2.32	3
4. Improving the role of local units	1.89	2.14	2.50	2.45	1.97	4
5. Cooperating with police at local areas to support project implementation	1.89	2.14	2.25	2.20	1.94	5

- Regarding the coordination of resources to create favourable conditions for managing scientific research, there were not any very excellent factors, except for some excellent ones, almost of them were evaluated at good and average levels. Lecturers got low scores when evaluating these contents. The contents "Improving the role of department/course division" and "Connecting division of scientific research and management with other departments/divisions" were assessed at good score, of which the content "Improving the role of department/course division" shared the highest score among survey contents (3.32). It reflected the leaders' attention and direction from faculties and departments; enhanced the role and responsibilities of the scientific council right from searching, selecting topics, creating good conditions for researches. At the same time, it showed the regular and direct relationship between scientific managers and the project leaders during research process. However, it is necessary to further promote the role of departments, divisions and department of research management in supporting project leaders throughout the project implementation. The two lowest scores items (1.97 and 1.94) and lecturers' scores continued to give at very low level (1.89), were the "Cooperating with police at local areas to support project implementation" and "Improving the role of local units". These items were prior issues with appropriate solutions.

Besides enthusiasm and passion on research, young lecturers lacked experience in research methods and approaches to scientific research tasks. Their demand for research was high, but the quota for projects was

limited. Only a small number of projects can receive funding from the Ministry of Public Security compared to the lecturers' potential competence in research. The biggest difficulty now is textbooks compilation and teaching materials for new majors due to experiences from actual work, and insufficiency of lecturers, especially highly experienced and "leading" ones with their qualified profession. Vietnamese academic staff also needed to be helped in teaching/research balance. Teaching overload can affect time spending on doing research as well as the timeline for project completion. *The equipment and technological conditions for carrying out researches were not satisfactory.* Information system and materials for research activities were still with certain limitations (see table 3)

Table 3: Impact levels and information status at police academies/universities

Factors	Impact levels					Status				
	Lecturers	Staffs	University/academy Presidents	Heads of departments	Mean	Lecturers	Staffs	University/academy Presidents	Heads of departments	Mean
1. IT application into research management	3.30	3.36	4.00	3.57	3.33	2.07	2.63	3.25	2.80	2.21
2. Information storage and dissemination	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	2.09	3.21	3.00	3.06	2.29

IT application into research management, storage and dissemination was with great impact on the research quality. However, they were assessed at average levels (2.21 and 2.29) from current research findings. Lecturers marked the lowest scores in these two issues (2.07; 2.09). Research document was an important element of research quality, but the confidential rule in police practices and factual information caused challenges in doing research. Currently, the Ministry of Public Security did not get a sufficient professional information system, lacked connections among academies. To access information, researchers must have the permission of competent leaders and comply with strict security regulations. The research funding was just supportive, even distributed, not focused on major and key issues. In general, the allocation of scientific funding has been implemented in accordance with the Ministry's regulations and gradually improved, reducing unnecessary intermediaries. However, its funding and settlement procedures were urgent issues and should be changed.

2.2.2. Results and drawbacks

Within nearly 50 years of training, police institutions and their teaching staff have implemented thousands of scientific works [12]. Presently, they have completed hundreds of textbooks for undergraduate and post-graduate training; thus, contributing to the development of police professional reasoning and teaching improvement. Many scientific projects have helped perfect professional reasoning on areas as security, intelligence, police, technology-logistics, fire protection, and building up people's police force in the new situation. The lecturers' scientific projects have contributed directly to raising their teaching practice at police institutions. These findings have also been applied into teaching at different training types and levels,

contributing to renovating the teaching contents, curriculum, syllabuses, and methodology... towards improving teaching quality and efficient application of research outcome in teaching. However, we have to admit that the potential competence for doing research at police institutions is not as expectation. At present, the number of highly qualified academics with titles as professors or associate professors does not yet parallel with the size and speed of development of such institutions. Young lecturers have not yet developed strong research teams led by leading experts in different scientific areas. Conferences, seminars, experience exchanges with experts or field workers, and closing meetings on scientific research, etc. have not yet been paid due attention to and organized regularly at the levels of faculties, departments, institutions and universities. No proper priority has been given to research implementation at these institutions, in general, and by lecturers, in particular, in the process of research approval. The system of libraries, especially those with reading rooms, though have been upgraded and equipped, have not yet met the present requirements. Furthermore, local area network has not been exploited to its full potential. There has been lack of information on research, especially on document directory as well as on science and technology from foreign countries. As a result, it does not meet the requirements of reality. Besides, time spent on research and policies on research support were still limited. Although these two factors played important role and directly affected the lecturers' research outcome quality, in reality, have not been paid much attention to. According to some survey questionnaires, respondents marked "highly affected" for those two factors, and marked "not much attention" paid to them. It can be commented that time spent on research and support policies received the lowest score and lower than average scores (1.90 and 1.96). In particular, lecturers gave extremely low evaluation for research time and support policy (1.82 and 1.90).

Table 4: Some conditions to ensure scientific research in police academies and universities

Contents	GV	CB	LĐT	LĐK	TB
1. Time spent on research	1.90	2.31	2.25	2.20	1.96
2. Policies on supporting and motivating academic research	1.82	2.14	2.50	2.35	1.90

Lecturers taught many times higher than the norm, even teaching after school or on holidays due to overcrowding at police institutions. They did not receive special allowances like other parts of the police force, with many tasks, without percentage of class time, so time for research was not much [12].

2.3. Proposing measures to improve the academic research quality at people's police academies and universities

2.3.1. Raising lecturers' awareness of the important role in doing research work

Doing research is a regular activity that goes hand in hand with teaching at people's police institutions, which plays an important part in building up and developing the police's professional and scientific reasoning. Without desire in research, lecturers can hardly produce high quality of research findings and teach efficiently if they do not have opportunities to penetrate into reality and experience actual contexts. Therefore, it is necessary for young lecturers to initially realize the important role of doing research, that helps improve their teaching quality.

They need to be active in carrying out the assigned task of researches. It is also important to raise the managerial cadres' awareness of doing scientific work so that they will try to promote scientific research among lecturers, to concentrate forces together with finance and favorable conditions for faculties, departments, and individuals to complete their research tasks. They should be proactive in organizing yearly scientific conferences in order to encourage academics to participate in forums with updated information. Leaders at faculties, department, and other units should prioritize research work and make conditions possible for their lecturers to participate in research.

2.3.2. Promoting the scientific research movement among lecturers from faculties and departments at police academies and universities

Faculties and Departments are the basic units, where lecturers stick directly and permanently throughout their teaching cause. Doing scientific work needs leaders' attention and direction from faculties and departments. Faculties and departments need to have thoughtful preparation and orientation of annual research plans for each lecturer, to build a system of grassroots research projects for each course, and to constantly add new projects to meet the innovation of contents and methods in each course. Leaders of units need to pay attention to their academics by encouraging them to participate in scientific research and praising those with many achievements and passion for this work. At the same time, this should be considered a criterion to evaluate and vote for the annual emulation title. It is also necessary to regularly renew teaching methods towards encouraging, arousing students' activeness, and requiring lecturers to take a new approach as well as update knowledge through research topics. At the professional meetings held by teams or faculties, departments, we should share the experience of scientific research by the previous person, guide in detail the steps in the scientific research process such as when to do scientific research work or how to register for innovative ideas in teaching, etc. In fact, many young lecturers are very embarrassed when doing such work for the first time. In order to promote the scientific research movement among lecturers, it is necessary to supplement some regulations on regimes and policies to create conditions for grassroots project coordinators such as regulating the time frame for lecturers to carry out research on the selected topics, go on field trips to serve the implementation of the project, and enjoy the appropriate policies to promote scientific research, etc. For projects that have been inspected and highly appreciated by boards of examiners at universities, research findings should be re-edited and published. Publication costs are paid by the university and the university holds the copyright. For other projects, coordinators are allowed to propose for publication with funding from the university and the project owner is the copyright holder. There should be policies to encourage female lecturers and young lecturers to actively do scientific research. In particular, female lecturers who have many difficulties in fieldwork and in some specific fields need attention and research facilitation. It is necessary to mobilize and seek financial support for research projects from various police units and localities where lecturers go to fieldwork and from those who have regular relationships with the university.

2.3.3. Renewing methods of organizing the academic research management towards creating favorable conditions for lecturers

It is crucial to innovate the way of organizing and managing scientific research to increase lecturers' activeness.

Lecturers' scientific research comes from the teaching practice, the profession struggle associated with its teaching majors. Therefore, it is necessary to have a unified mechanism, from identifying research issues, organizing researches, to accepting and evaluating research results and organizing their applications into practice, research and teaching. Right from the stage of selecting topics, there must be direct participation of lecturers who registered the title of topics, starting from practical teaching issues and the advice of practical units. It is compulsory to strictly follow the procedures for registration and selection from project groups to ensure professional knowledge before proposing to councils of upper levels. Moreover, topics selection should be done in combination with teaching, applying into teaching, and balancing issues in different majors. The university board chooses the topic with the participation of practical experts through the evaluation level and should not change members to ensure consistency and approach to the project from the beginning. It is important to carefully consider the conditions for implementing projects to ensure their quality such as: members, practical units in coordination, task expectation... and project findings applied into teaching practice. Furthermore, qualified lecturers should be assigned in specific tasks in researches. The project coordinator needs to develop a detailed field trip plan, time; and authentic documents to be collected to ensure confidentiality. Coordinated units should provide documents and comments on the actual field trip. At the same time, faculties and departments need to facilitate the time frame for lecturers to implement their project and the functional units of the university have to cooperate to create high advantages for carrying out research. Application of research results is a criterion for evaluating project quality and ensuring practical values. Public security institutions and universities should proactively address the difficult problems to overcome the current inadequacies of financial funding when the number of approved projects under the Ministry's budget is too small compared to the urgent research needs at those institutions. Police academies and universities have to proactively increase the number of research projects, give priority to focused on topics in order to develop teaching textbooks with self-financing funds from the institution's welfare fund. This shows interest, investment, support in research topics, especially reducing the payment procedures towards final product payment. These projects are equivalent to the grassroots level projects funded by the Ministry's budget and are counted as the grassroots projects in the approval of lecturer ranking.

2.3.4. Fostering management and research capacity in police academies and universities

Police academies and universities develop and implement thorough plans of Resolution N⁰17 of the Central Police Party Committee on basic and comprehensive renovation of education and training in police institutions. In particular, it is necessary to focus on the fifth solution on developing the teaching staff and educational management staff. Improving the management capacity of the staff working in scientific research activities is a leading factor for determining management success. Scientific managers need to have good management experience, strong professional qualifications, with firm grasp of characteristics of each unit's professional activities and flexibly apply them in management. Fostering lecturers' research capacity improvement is an important factor for determining the quality of research projects. *For management staff:* It is advisable to regularly organize supplemental trainings on management knowledge, administrative personal tasks, content writing, regulations of scientific management, etc.; thereby, to grasp documents, flexibly apply, review and propose ways to overcome inadequacies in coordinating with relevant regulations as well as advise, and recommend to finalize legal documents on scientific research activities in general, including rules of

implementing lecturers' academic projects. Research managers should be properly trained in management and study to improve their masters and doctoral degrees in educational management. Police institutions should focus on training, fostering planning skills, and coordinating with the functional units of the university to get them involved in scientific research management, project management skills as well as sharing experience in organizing the implementation of research projects. Another mission is to strengthen the scientific management staff to manage and assign experienced staff in teaching, implementing and managing projects so as to carry out scientific projects and perform the function of checking and guiding the implementation of scientific tasks.

For lecturers:

It is necessary to regularly open training courses on scientific research methods, teamwork skills, especially for young lecturers. Most of the young lecturers are enthusiastic and with many research ideas but the research experience is still weak. In particular, young lecturers are confused with skills to implement a project such as naming the project, selecting research methods... or skills in connecting the local units and administrative procedures towards regulations. Another importance is to implement training plans for lecturers to meet the immediate and long-term requirements, ensuring that the teaching staff is sufficient in number, strong in quality, and qualified to be the project leaders. Besides, evaluating and classifying lecturers in departments according to years of working and promoting the research potential in each faculty and department should be paid due attention to. Attention should also be paid to young lecturers with development prospects to make investment plans and form a group of leading lecturers in each course. There should be policies to encourage leading experts and retired cadres with professional knowledge, research experience, and experience in directly managing projects to foster and guide young lecturers to study and implement scientific police projects. There should also be a mechanism to encourage professors and associate professors to support and train young lecturers to participate in co-research.

2.3.5. Strengthening the coordination and collaboration of scientific research in and out of the institution, especially between the university and the local units

It is urgent to reform scientific management regulations and coordination mechanism towards encouraging research and strengthening specific responsibilities for individuals and units. Strengthening coordination with practical units, including management units and combat practical units needs to be done right from the selection stage to study practical, feasible and combat issues. At the same time, we should encourage teachers' penetration in practical studies participation, in summarizing the working topics and drawing experiences as a basis for building theories for implementing quality assurance of science projects on the background of practical tasks.

3. Conclusion

The Vietnamese fundamental renovation of education and training in the people's police must pay special attention to raising the quality of lecturers, of which lecturers' scientific research activities played a decisive role. In particular, given the rapid and complicated fluctuations of the international and regional situations, with

sensitive sectors such as national security, it is necessary to promote this activity to the level of the assigned tasks of the people's police academies and universities. Improving the quality of lecturers' scientific research is both a regular and long-term basic strategic task for developing highly qualified people's police personnel. The measures mentioned by the author, if being concerned and implemented synchronously, would contribute to improving the effectiveness of lecturers' scientific research at police institutions today.

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