

PATHWAYS FOR EARLY-CAREER FACULTY IN CHINESE SCHOOLS OF MANAGEMENT TO BECOME MBA INSTRUCTORS: AN ACADEMIC-PRACTICE-PEDAGOGY-INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

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Abstract: The rapid expansion and differentiation of professional graduate education in China has increased the demand for faculty capable of teaching Master of Business Administration (MBA) students. However, the transition from conventional university teaching to MBA teaching is not simply a matter of academic rank or disciplinary expertise. MBA students typically possess substantial work experience, and professional-degree education increasingly emphasises practice-oriented curricula, case teaching, industry engagement, and the ability to solve complex managerial problems. This conceptual study examines how early-career faculty members in Chinese schools of management can develop the capabilities required to undertake MBA teaching. Drawing on Chinese higher-education policies, management-education research, faculty-development literature, and international business-school accreditation standards, the article develops an Academic–Practice–Pedagogy–Institutional (APPI) framework. The framework identifies four interdependent forms of readiness: academic competence, practice currency, pedagogical integration capability, and institutional legitimacy. Based on these dimensions, the article proposes a staged career pathway from disciplinary preparation and classroom observation to case development, industry engagement, supervised MBA teaching, independent course responsibility, and sustained professional renewal. The analysis further argues that universities should replace rank-dominated selection with portfolio-based readiness assessment and establish mentoring, co-teaching, case-development, industry-immersion, and differentiated evaluation mechanisms. The study contributes to management-education research by conceptualising MBA faculty development as a role-transition process requiring the integration of scholarly and practical knowledge rather than the accumulation of academic credentials alone.

Keywords: MBA education; Early-career faculty; Faculty development; Case teaching; China

1 INTRODUCTION

Business schools face a longstanding tension between academic rigour and managerial relevance. University faculty are expected to produce theoretically grounded knowledge, yet professional management education requires instructors to translate that knowledge into the ambiguous, contextual, and decision-oriented problems encountered by managers. This tension is particularly visible in Master of Business Administration education, where students are expected not only to learn disciplinary knowledge but also to develop judgement, integrative thinking, decision-making competence, and the ability to act under conditions of incomplete information [1-2].

The issue has become increasingly important in China. Professional-degree graduate education is now explicitly differentiated from academic-degree education. Recent national policy requires professional-degree programmes to emphasise occupational practice, strengthen industry–education integration, develop practice-oriented curricula, and make greater use of case teaching, internships, and authentic professional problem settings [3]. These policy directions imply that the competence profile of faculty teaching professional-degree students cannot simply replicate that of conventional academic graduate education.

MBA education represents an especially demanding form of this professional orientation. MBA cohorts commonly include students with substantial work experience. Consequently, instructors routinely teach learners who bring organisational knowledge into the classroom and who may test academic theories against concrete managerial situations. For early-career faculty, this creates a difficult transition. A young lecturer or assistant professor may possess a doctorate, methodological sophistication, peer-reviewed publications, and experience teaching undergraduates or academic postgraduates, but those achievements do not automatically provide the capabilities required to facilitate experienced professional learners.

MBA teaching frequently requires rapid movement between theory and practice, discussion among participants with heterogeneous experience, diagnosis of poorly structured managerial problems, management of conflicting viewpoints, development and use of teaching cases, and credible interaction with executives. Chinese research on MBA case teaching has likewise identified continuing needs in instructor preparation, case development, local case resources, and institutional faculty-development systems [4-5].

Despite growing attention to MBA quality, the literature contains substantially more research on curricula, case teaching, accreditation, student learning, and programme quality than on the career transition of early-career academics into MBA teaching roles. The central question is therefore not merely how to improve MBA teaching, but how an early-career faculty member becomes ready to teach MBA students in the first place.

This study addresses three research questions:

RQ1. What distinguishes readiness for MBA teaching from conventional academic teaching readiness among early-career management faculty?

RQ2. Through what developmental pathways can early-career faculty acquire the academic, practical, pedagogical, and organisational capabilities required for MBA teaching?

RQ3. What institutional mechanisms can enable this transition without weakening research expectations or creating unsustainable workloads?

To address these questions, the article develops an Academic–Practice–Pedagogy–Institutional (APPI) framework and argues that becoming an MBA instructor should be understood as a multidimensional professional transition rather than an automatic consequence of academic seniority.

2 THE CHANGING INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT OF MBA FACULTY DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA

2.1 From Academic Homogeneity to Professional-Degree Differentiation

Professional and academic postgraduate education in China have historically shared elements of faculty structure, course format, and evaluation. Recent policy, however, explicitly seeks greater differentiation. The Ministry of Education identifies professional degrees as oriented toward industry needs and the development of practically innovative professionals [3]. It requires stronger integration of foundational knowledge with professional practice, recommends case teaching and authentic professional settings, and calls for deeper industry–education integration.

If professional-degree education is structurally different from academic-degree education, then the competence profile of those who teach professional-degree students cannot be assumed to be identical. For MBA education, subject knowledge remains necessary, but it must be combined with the capacity to interpret organisational realities, communicate with experienced professionals, and convert academic knowledge into decision-relevant learning. The policy environment therefore creates what this article terms a dual-currency requirement: MBA faculty need both academic currency and practice currency.

2.2 Changes in the Evaluation of Early-Career Faculty

A second institutional shift concerns faculty evaluation. Reforms to the professional-title system for Chinese university teachers have emphasised differentiated evaluation and representative achievements rather than purely quantitative publication indicators. Teaching achievements, research outputs, technical reports, and other forms of contribution can be considered within more differentiated evaluation systems [6].

This change creates institutional space for an MBA-specific faculty-development pathway. The implication is not that research should be replaced by teaching. Instead, universities can recognise different forms of academic contribution and allow early-career management scholars to build careers through combinations of research, teaching innovation, case development, and industry engagement.

3 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

3.1 Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Shulman's concept of pedagogical content knowledge distinguishes knowing a subject from knowing how to make that subject learnable [7]. An accomplished scholar in finance, strategy, marketing, operations, or organisational behaviour may understand the disciplinary literature extremely well but still struggle to transform it into learning experiences appropriate for managers.

For MBA teaching, pedagogical content knowledge involves an additional transformation. The instructor must move from theory to managerial problem, from managerial problem to decision, from decision to discussion, and from discussion back to conceptual integration. This differs from the more conventional sequence of theory, explanation, example, and assessment. The distinction is central to the transition examined in this study.

3.2 Experiential Learning

Kolb's experiential learning model provides a second theoretical foundation [8]. Management learning often moves through experience, reflection, conceptualisation, and experimentation. Experienced MBA students enter the classroom with substantial reservoirs of organisational experience. The instructor's task is therefore not simply to provide knowledge but to help students interrogate experience through theory.

A successful MBA class consequently operates through a reciprocal relationship: theory interprets experience, while experience tests theory. This relationship explains why academic expertise without practice awareness may be insufficient.

3.3 Communities of Practice

Lave and Wenger's theory of situated learning and communities of practice helps explain how early-career faculty acquire MBA teaching capability [9]. Many aspects of sophisticated management teaching are tacit and difficult to learn through instructional manuals alone.

These include deciding when to interrupt a discussion, identifying a productive disagreement, responding to an experienced executive who challenges a theory, sequencing board notes, choosing which student comment to pursue, moving from discussion back to conceptual synthesis, and managing uncertainty without losing classroom authority. Such capabilities are frequently developed through observation, assistance, co-teaching, feedback, and progressively greater responsibility. MBA faculty development should therefore be organised partly as professional apprenticeship.

3.4 Reflective Practice

Schön's concept of the reflective practitioner is especially relevant to MBA education because instructors frequently confront situations that cannot be completely scripted [10]. Case discussions produce unpredictable questions, and students bring different industries, organisational levels, and functional backgrounds into the classroom.

Effective instructors therefore require both reflection-on-action after teaching and reflection-in-action during classroom interaction. Teaching improvement becomes an iterative cycle of planning, teaching, observing, reflecting, redesigning, and reteaching. This process should constitute an institutionalised component of faculty development rather than being left entirely to individual trial and error.

4 RESEARCH DESIGN

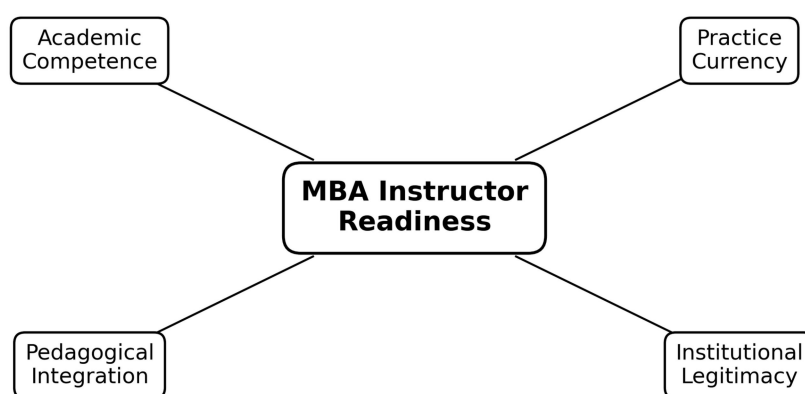
This study adopts an integrative conceptual review and policy-analysis approach. The objective is not to estimate statistically which factors cause appointment as an MBA instructor. No survey, interview, or experimental data are inferred. Instead, the analysis synthesises four bodies of evidence.

First, Chinese national policy documents concerning professional-degree graduate education and faculty evaluation are used to identify institutional expectations surrounding professional teaching. Second, peer-reviewed studies of MBA and case-based management education are used to identify pedagogical requirements associated with experienced professional learners. Third, scholarship on faculty development, professional learning, experiential education, and academic role formation is used to theorise the transition process. Fourth, international business-school accreditation standards are considered as external benchmarks. AACSB's faculty qualification framework distinguishes forms of academic and professional engagement and emphasises sustained faculty development and currency [11].

The framework developed below represents a theoretical synthesis of these sources rather than an empirically validated promotion model.

5 THE APPI FRAMEWORK FOR MBA INSTRUCTOR READINESS

The analysis suggests that sustainable MBA teaching readiness depends on four complementary forms of capability: academic competence, practice currency, pedagogical integration capability, and institutional legitimacy. These dimensions constitute the Academic–Practice–Pedagogy–Institutional (APPI) framework (Figure 1) [12–13].



Four complementary forms of readiness for the transition into MBA teaching

Figure 1 Academic-Practice-Pedagogy-Institutional (APPI) Framework for MBA Instructor Readiness

5.1 Academic Competence

Academic competence constitutes the foundation of MBA teaching readiness. Instructors should possess sufficient disciplinary mastery to explain not only established tools but also their assumptions, boundary conditions, and

limitations. Relevant evidence for early-career faculty may include doctoral training, peer-reviewed research, a sustained research agenda, and the ability to integrate emerging scholarship into teaching [14]. However, academic competence should be interpreted as an entry condition rather than sufficient evidence of MBA readiness. An academically productive faculty member may still require substantial development in practice engagement and professional pedagogy before assuming independent MBA responsibility.

5.2 Practice Currency

Practice currency refers to a faculty member's continuing exposure to actual managerial organisations and problems. It can be developed through consulting, corporate research collaboration, executive interviews, company visits, industry projects, advisory work, executive education, field research, professional associations, managerial case development, and temporary industry immersion.

Practice currency does not require every MBA instructor to have previously held a senior corporate position [15]. The central requirement is credible and sustained engagement with contemporary management practice. Requiring extensive prior executive careers would unnecessarily exclude academically strong young scholars, while assuming that academic research alone provides adequate familiarity with managerial reality can produce teaching that is technically correct but professionally distant.

5.3 Pedagogical Integration Capability

Pedagogical integration is the ability to combine scholarly knowledge and managerial practice into an effective learning process. It includes case facilitation, experiential learning design, discussion leadership, questioning, debriefing, action learning, simulation, group learning, assessment of professional competence, and management of heterogeneous classroom experience [16-17].

Chinese evidence indicates that this remains an important area for development. Research on MBA case education has reported gaps in instructor case-teaching capacity and case-development competence [4]. Mu and Hatch further show that case teaching can work effectively with Chinese students when instructors are adequately prepared and courses are carefully designed [5]. The obstacle is therefore not an inherent incompatibility between case learning and Chinese learners, but partly the institutional and pedagogical conditions surrounding implementation.

Pedagogical integration can be summarised conceptually as scholarship plus managerial context plus facilitation. Without facilitation, academic and practical knowledge may coexist without producing effective professional learning.

5.4 Institutional Legitimacy

The fourth dimension is institutional legitimacy. A faculty member may possess strong academic, practical, and pedagogical capabilities but still require authorisation and organisational support to enter an MBA teaching role. MBA instruction involves programme-level responsibilities, including course assignment, curriculum coherence, assurance of learning, student evaluation, accreditation, teaching-load decisions, and programme reputation [18-19].

Institutional legitimacy can be created through formal selection, teaching demonstrations, peer evaluation, course-team approval, co-teaching, programme-director assessment, student feedback, teaching portfolios, and periodic review. This dimension prevents MBA faculty development from being conceptualised as a purely individual career project; it is a joint production between the faculty member and the business school (Table 1).

Table 1 APPI Dimensions and Observable Evidence of Readiness

Dimension	Core question	Illustrative evidence	Primary developmental risk
Academic competence	Does the faculty member possess credible disciplinary expertise?	Doctoral preparation; peer-reviewed research; active research agenda; course-relevant scholarship	Treating academic credentials as sufficient for professional teaching
Practice currency	Does the faculty member understand current managerial realities?	Corporate projects; consulting; executive interviews; field research; case development	Relying on abstract theory without organisational context
Pedagogical integration	Can theory and practice be converted into professional learning?	Case facilitation; simulations; discussion leadership; debriefing; professional assessment	Lecturing rather than facilitating experienced learners
Institutional legitimacy	Has the programme validated readiness and provided support?	Trial teaching; peer review; mentoring; co-teaching; teaching portfolio; authorisation	Assigning MBA teaching solely on academic seniority

6 A STAGED PATHWAY FROM EARLY-CAREER FACULTY MEMBER TO MBA INSTRUCTOR

6.1 Stage 1: Academic Foundation

The first stage establishes disciplinary credibility. Early-career faculty should identify one primary MBA teaching domain consistent with their research expertise. A researcher specialising in organisational behaviour, for example, should initially develop depth in organisational behaviour, leadership, or human resource management rather than

attempting to become a general-purpose MBA lecturer. The objective is to convert research expertise into an identifiable teaching domain and to begin constructing a teaching portfolio that connects major theories, recent scholarship, managerial phenomena, and potential cases.

6.2 Stage 2: MBA Classroom Observation

Before assuming independent MBA teaching, early-career faculty should systematically observe experienced instructors. Observation should examine course architecture, question sequencing, case opening, board planning, handling of disagreement, student participation, theory integration, time management, and class closure. The observer should subsequently discuss the session with the instructor. This stage converts tacit teaching expertise into observable professional practice.

6.3 Stage 3: Case Development

Case development should be treated as one of the most effective bridges between research and MBA teaching. Writing a case forces a faculty member to enter an organisation, understand managerial context, identify a decision problem, distinguish relevant from irrelevant information, and determine how theoretical concepts illuminate the situation. Case writing therefore develops academic, practical, and pedagogical capabilities simultaneously. The developmental progression can move from case user to case adapter, case co-author, independent case author, and eventually case-teaching mentor.

6.4 Stage 4: Industry Immersion

At this stage, early-career faculty should accumulate structured practice exposure. Random company visits are insufficient. Industry engagement should be connected to the faculty member's teaching and research domain. A strategy scholar might follow a firm's international expansion decision; an operations scholar might undertake a plant-based process-improvement project; a marketing scholar might cooperate with a firm on customer analytics; and a human-resource scholar might investigate organisational transformation. The critical mechanism is problem ownership: managerial credibility develops when faculty must understand and respond to a real organisational problem rather than merely observe it.

6.5 Stage 5: Assisted and Co-Taught MBA Instruction

The first MBA teaching experience should preferably be supervised. Possible arrangements include guest teaching, one-session case facilitation, selected modules, or co-teaching with an experienced MBA professor. Co-teaching reduces instructional risk, enables immediate feedback, and exposes the early-career instructor to the full instructional cycle, including preparation, delivery, student interaction, assessment, and post-course evaluation.

6.6 Stage 6: Independent Course Responsibility

Independent MBA course responsibility should be awarded when the faculty member can demonstrate a coherent readiness portfolio. Academic rank alone should not determine readiness. An associate professor with limited managerial or interactive teaching experience may be less prepared for MBA instruction than a younger assistant professor who combines strong disciplinary expertise, case development, company engagement, and demonstrated facilitation competence. Appointment should therefore be based on evidence of readiness rather than seniority alone (Table 2).

Table 2 Staged Pathway into Independent MBA Teaching

Stage	Primary developmental task	Typical activity	Readiness evidence
1. Academic foundation	Establish disciplinary credibility	Build a research-aligned teaching domain	Coherent course-relevant scholarly expertise
2. Classroom observation	Learn tacit MBA teaching routines	Observe experienced instructors and debrief sessions	Structured observation records and mentor feedback
3. Case development	Translate management reality into learning material	Use, adapt, and write cases	Case portfolio and teaching notes
4. Industry immersion	Build practice currency	Company projects, field research, consulting, executive interviews	Documented engagement with real managerial problems
5. Assisted teaching	Develop facilitation under supervision	Guest teaching, module teaching, co-teaching	Peer-reviewed trial teaching and reflection
6. Independent responsibility	Assume full course accountability	Design, deliver, assess, and improve an MBA course	Programme authorisation and sustained teaching portfolio

7 A PORTFOLIO-BASED MBA INSTRUCTOR READINESS SYSTEM

A practical institutional system should assess readiness using a portfolio rather than a single academic-rank threshold. The purpose is not to create another rigid quantitative score. A teacher should not become an MBA instructor simply by accumulating points. Instead, the portfolio allows faculty committees to judge whether the candidate has developed a coherent combination of complementary capabilities (Table 3).

Table 3 Portfolio-Based Evidence for MBA Instructor Readiness

Dimension	Evidence of emerging readiness	Evidence of independent MBA readiness
Academic competence	Doctoral or disciplinary preparation; active research agenda	Recognised expertise directly supporting the MBA course
Practice currency	Company visits, executive interviews, field research	Sustained industry projects, consulting, executive engagement, or applied research
Case competence	Participation in case workshops; use of existing cases	Development or publication of teaching cases and demonstrated facilitation
Teaching capability	Undergraduate/graduate teaching and MBA observation	Successful trial teaching, co-teaching, and peer-reviewed MBA sessions
Professional learner engagement	Limited interaction with experienced managers	Ability to facilitate experienced, heterogeneous MBA cohorts
Programme contribution	Participation in MBA activities	Curriculum development, student supervision, and programme service
Reflective development	Informal teaching reflection	Teaching portfolio documenting feedback and course redesign
Institutional validation	Mentor recommendation	Formal programme-level teaching authorisation

8 INSTITUTIONAL METHODS FOR ACCELERATING THE TRANSITION

8.1 Establish an MBA Faculty-Development Programme

Business schools should establish a structured MBA faculty-development programme that coordinates teaching observation, workshops, mentorship, case development, industry engagement, and teaching evaluation. The programme should be longitudinal rather than episodic because complex professional teaching capability rarely develops through one-off seminars.

8.2 Create an MBA Teaching Apprenticeship

Each candidate can be paired with an experienced MBA instructor for one academic year. The apprenticeship should include classroom observation, teaching-plan review, case preparation, limited classroom delivery, student-assessment design, and reflective feedback. This arrangement turns faculty development into supervised professional formation.

8.3 Provide Industry Sabbaticals and Micro-Immersion

Full-year industry sabbaticals may be unrealistic for early-career faculty under research pressure. Schools can therefore develop shorter alternatives such as four-week company projects, summer industry residencies, executive interview programmes, consulting teams, company-based case-writing projects, or joint research centres. The objective is not to increase the number of external activities but to improve the quality and relevance of practice exposure.

8.4 Recognise Cases and Teaching Innovation in Career Evaluation

The transition will fail if universities encourage MBA teaching while rewarding only conventional research outputs. Current reforms in China create room for broader representative achievements and differentiated evaluation. Business schools should therefore recognise high-quality teaching cases, curriculum design, pedagogical research, executive education, teaching awards, case competitions, corporate projects, and evidence of student learning alongside research outputs.

9 BALANCING RESEARCH AND MBA TEACHING

The most serious obstacle facing early-career faculty may not be capability but time. Young academics frequently face simultaneous expectations for publication, grants, teaching, student supervision, administrative service, and career advancement. MBA teaching can be especially demanding because preparation for interactive case classes may require substantially more work than repeating an established lecture.

The solution should not be to require young scholars to maximise every dimension simultaneously. Business schools need sequenced career development. During the earliest career stage, research capacity and disciplinary expertise may receive greater protection. MBA observation and limited teaching can be introduced gradually. As the faculty member develops a stronger scholarly foundation, industry engagement and professional teaching responsibilities can increase. A sustainable model therefore uses career-stage differentiation rather than simultaneous maximisation.

10 THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS

Proposition 1. Academic competence will positively influence MBA teaching readiness, but its effect will be substantially stronger when accompanied by practice currency.

Proposition 2. Practice engagement will improve MBA teaching effectiveness primarily when faculty possess the pedagogical capability to translate managerial experience into structured learning.

Proposition 3. Case development will accelerate the transition to MBA teaching because it simultaneously strengthens practice engagement, pedagogical integration, and disciplinary application.

Proposition 4. Classroom observation, mentoring, and co-teaching will reduce the transition costs associated with first-time MBA teaching and increase perceived teaching self-efficacy.

Proposition 5. Institutional recognition of professional-degree teaching will moderate the relationship between individual faculty-development effort and sustained participation in MBA education.

Proposition 6. A multidimensional readiness portfolio will predict sustainable MBA teaching performance more accurately than academic rank alone.

11 DISCUSSION

11.1 Becoming an MBA Instructor Is a Role Transition, Not Merely a Promotion

The central argument of this article is that entering MBA teaching should not be treated as an automatic reward for academic seniority. MBA teaching constitutes a distinct professional role that requires disciplinary expertise, managerial relevance, adult-learning competence, discussion leadership, and institutional accountability.

The transition can be understood as movement from academic specialist to scholar-educator, then to practice-engaged educator, and ultimately to independent MBA instructor. Not every academic needs to complete this transition. Some faculty may contribute more effectively through research, doctoral education, undergraduate education, or other teaching roles. A mature business school should permit differentiated academic identities.

11.2 The Central Challenge Is Knowledge Translation

The real divide between conventional academic teaching and MBA teaching is not simply the amount of industry experience. It is knowledge translation. An executive with extensive experience but weak conceptual capability may provide interesting stories without producing systematic learning. An accomplished researcher with limited ability to contextualise theories may provide sophisticated concepts without managerial meaning.

The highest-value MBA instructor occupies the intersection of rigorous scholarship, relevant practice, and effective pedagogy. This interpretation is consistent with international accreditation logic, which recognises multiple combinations of academic preparation and professional engagement while requiring faculty to maintain currency and teaching effectiveness [11].

11.3 Case Writing as a Strategic Faculty-Development Technology

Case writing deserves particular attention because it integrates the APPI dimensions unusually well. A strong teaching case requires the faculty member to identify a theoretically relevant managerial problem, access organisational data, communicate with practitioners, construct a decision situation, design learning objectives, prepare teaching notes, and test the material in the classroom.

Case writing is therefore simultaneously research engagement, industry engagement, curriculum development, and teaching preparation. For early-career faculty, it is not merely a teaching technique but a strategic technology for professional role development.

12 IMPLICATIONS FOR UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

Schools of management should distinguish academic promotion systems from MBA teaching authorisation systems. Academic title determines an individual's position within the university, whereas MBA teaching authorisation should determine whether the faculty member is currently prepared to undertake a particular professional teaching responsibility. The two systems may overlap but should not be identical.

Universities should also adopt differentiated qualification pathways. A research-intensive young scholar may enter MBA teaching through research, case development, company collaboration, and co-teaching. A faculty member with greater professional experience may follow a route emphasising pedagogical training, scholarly updating, and supervised MBA instruction. There should not be only one legitimate pathway.

Faculty development should be longitudinal. One-off teaching seminars rarely create expert instructors. Observation, repeated practice, feedback, mentoring, and reflection are more consistent with the development of complex professional competence. Workload allocation must also recognise the actual cost of high-quality MBA instruction. If a new instructor is simultaneously expected to develop original cases, establish corporate connections, redesign courses, maintain high publication output, and teach a full load, the resulting system is likely to generate superficial compliance rather than excellence.

13 IMPLICATIONS FOR EARLY-CAREER FACULTY

For an individual young faculty member seeking to enter MBA teaching, the most effective strategy is not to ask what academic title is required. The better question is what evidence would convince an MBA programme director that the faculty member can create value for experienced management students.

A strong readiness portfolio contains four elements: recognised academic expertise, credible understanding of real management problems, demonstrated capacity to facilitate professional learning rather than merely lecture, and institutional validation through observable teaching and programme contribution.

In practical terms, an efficient developmental sequence is to establish one research specialisation, observe excellent MBA classes, attend formal case-teaching training, develop a China-based teaching case, undertake a real company project, co-teach an MBA module, obtain structured peer feedback, redesign the session, and then assume independent course responsibility.

14 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This article has several limitations. First, it is a conceptual and policy-analysis study. The APPI framework has not yet been tested using longitudinal faculty data. Second, Chinese business schools differ substantially in mission, ranking, regional environment, MBA programme size, faculty workload, and international accreditation status. A transition mechanism appropriate for a research-intensive university may not transfer directly to a teaching-oriented institution.

Third, MBA teaching readiness may vary by discipline. Quantitative subjects such as accounting or operations management may require different teaching capabilities from leadership, strategy, entrepreneurship, or organisational behaviour. Fourth, institutional authorisation processes for MBA teaching are not standardised across Chinese universities. Future studies should therefore conduct comparative institutional research rather than assuming a uniform national practice.

Future empirical work should test the APPI framework using multi-site data from Chinese schools of management. A particularly valuable design would follow early-career faculty longitudinally from their first MBA observation or co-teaching experience through independent course responsibility. Researchers could measure academic capital, industry engagement, case-development activity, teaching self-efficacy, peer evaluation, student learning, classroom engagement, and career outcomes. Mixed-method designs could further examine how faculty negotiate tensions between research identity and professional teaching identity.

15 CONCLUSION

The development of high-quality MBA education ultimately depends on high-quality MBA educators. For Chinese schools of management, expanding the pool of MBA instructors cannot be achieved simply by assigning additional courses to existing young faculty or waiting for them to reach higher academic ranks.

MBA teaching requires a distinct configuration of capabilities. The APPI framework conceptualises those capabilities through academic competence, practice currency, pedagogical integration, and institutional legitimacy. Academic competence provides intellectual credibility. Practice currency provides managerial relevance. Pedagogical integration transforms knowledge and experience into learning. Institutional legitimacy ensures quality, accountability, and programme coherence.

The transition should therefore be gradual. Early-career faculty should move from disciplinary specialisation to classroom observation, case development, industry engagement, supervised teaching, independent teaching, and continuing professional renewal. Universities, meanwhile, must create the conditions that make such development possible through mentorship, co-teaching, industry immersion, case-development support, differentiated evaluation, and portfolio-based teaching authorisation.

Excellent MBA instructors are not produced by academic seniority alone. They emerge when scholarly expertise, managerial reality, pedagogical competence, and institutional development are deliberately integrated.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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