

FROM QUALITY SUPERVISION METHOD TO QUALITY GUARANTY PRINCIPLES – THE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERGRATION OF VIETNAM EDUCATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Nguyen Van Hiep, Pham Van Thinh

Thu Dau Mot University

ABSTRACT

Higher education in Vietnam is still young, primarily originated after 1954 in Northern Vietnam and after 1975 in Southern Vietnam. Before Vietnam officially announced the “renovation” (policy of renewal), the educational quality guaranty in higher education was implemented by meticulously selecting the intake and closely supervising the graduates by testing, graduation recognition, granting degrees. Since the country commenced the “renovation” in 1986, the educational quality guaranty in higher education has been transformed into the human resource satisfaction and implemented the quality supervision method. Within more than 10 years of the early 21st century, higher education in Vietnam has built the quality guaranty system and mechanism in accordance with the international integration. The quality guarantee operations in higher education have achieved recognizable results, marking a dramatic transformation in the integration process of the country.

Keywords: *supervision method, quality guaranty, higher education, Vietnam*

1. From the quality supervision method to the solution of human resources satisfaction – the first move in quality guarantee in higher education training

After 1954 in Northern Vietnam and after 1975 in Southern Vietnam until the time before the official announcement of renovation (1986), Vietnam maintained the state subsidies. All of the economic and social operations were implemented according to the government plans. In higher education, the training and employing graduates were implemented by the plan made by the Committee of Government Plan. Based on the norms of the Committee of Government Plan, under the directions of the ministries (governing bodies of the universities), the universities trained and allocated students to departments, localities as assigned by government plans. In the early 1980s, due to the huge supply of personnel in state organizations, the government ordered to “close personnel”, graduates were not allocated jobs, which resulted in the modest scale of higher education training. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Education and Training in 1985-1986 academic year, the whole country had 95 universities with the total population of 126,195 students.

In the condition of underdeveloped economy, and of rare changes in politics and society, the management approach in higher education was not made as a factor to motivate

the training quality. For a long time, higher education system in Vietnam maintained the notion that quality was managed by supervising the intake and the output through competitive testing. First and foremost, in order to enter higher education, students had to sit in an entrance exam with meticulous selection and narrow selection rates. For the state plan of allocating human resources for university was rather low, on average, every university enrolled some dozens or some hundreds at most. Therefore, students who were admitted to higher education definitely belonged to the elite ranks, or only excellent students could be matriculated. Following the strict intake selection, the training process continued to be supervised by close testing. The end-of-semester tests and end-of-academic year tests, graduation tests were put forward and implemented seriously. The testing, approving graduation and granting degree process were implemented according to “mandatory” decisions from the higher authorities. Besides the quality supervision through testing, the government also established an investigation system in order to supervise the enrollment, training, testing process of various levels. However, the purpose of the investigation in this period primarily was to detect mistakes and punish organizations or individuals who violated the published criteria. The investigation did not propose the aim of improving the training quality.

In 1986, the 5th National Communist Party Congress held by Vietnamese Communist Party proposed the way to reform the country. Accordingly, it was necessary for the Education Department to have drastic changes in higher education training in the direction of taking the domestic training as the main to increase the capacity of human resource supply in the fields of economics and society. The higher education organizations needed to maximize the opportunities to approach the learners. In order to achieve that target, the Education Department proposed many programs, measures to improve the training scale and quality.

In the 1987-1990 period, higher education has accomplished three impressive, laying foundation for the reformation. The first program put the aim of reforming the training, implementing the early reformation in training mechanism, approach, process, extending the training scale, enhancing the training quality and result. This program was implemented with three solutions which were reorganizing the official training system into a standard system with new training programs, diversifying training forms (long-term, short-term, full-time training or in-service training, regular and irregular training), enhancing and fostering postgraduate training. The second program aimed at enhancing scientific research, laboring and manufacturing, improving facilities in higher education with these solutions including strongly developing scientific research, conducting the application of research results in manufacturing and living, encouraging students to do scientific research, fostering international cooperation. The third program aimed at reforming the organizing, managing and building staff to innovate and enhance the quality of teaching and managing staff. This program was implemented with 3 solutions which were standardizing the teaching staff, settling policies for staff, teachers and reforming the managing organization.

After 1990, implementing the resolution of the 4th Central Committee (Term VII) and the resolution of the 2nd Central Committee (Term VIII), higher education kept on

changing, heading for creating appropriate transitional step that was compatible with the economic and social situations in the early stage of industrialization and modernization. Higher education shifted its reformation focus into reforming the training contents and programs. The Ministry of Education and Training managed to thoroughly implement the two – stage - training process (general and major), to reform teaching methodology, rearrange the higher education system, continue to extend the scale, innovate the management and build the staff and teachers. With the policy and positive solutions along with the funding (from the government and students' tuition fees), the training quality showed sharp improvement.

It can be stated that after 15 years of innovation until the last years of the 20th century, Vietnam education has shifted from quality supervision method to sufficient human resource satisfaction. This shift was evidently shown through the policies and solutions of increasing the training scale, maximizing the learning opportunities for learners, enhancing the innovation of contents, programs, improving the managing quality, fostering the funding investment for training organizations... Despite many limitations (the increasing of training scale did not meet the reality need of the country; the quality management was not thoroughly evaluated due to the lack of evaluation system and mechanism), this was a significant shift in training quality for higher education in Vietnam.

2. The establishment of quality guaranty principle – Development and Integration

In 20th century, our country was on the stage of industrialization and modernization, the pace of economic and social development gradually increased. In that situation, higher education not only met the people's need of higher education, but also satisfied the need of high quality human resources for manufacturing and society. Strategy for socio-economic development 2001 - 2010 adopted at the 9th National Congress of the National Communist Party was determined to develop and improve the quality of higher education, postgraduate; focus investment in building a national-key university of regional level, striving to reach the international level.

In order to guarantee the higher education quality to the trend of international integration, it was significant to establish an internal and external quality guaranty system. To satisfy this need, in January 2002, the Ministry of Education and Training established a department taking charge of the quality verification under the management of Higher Education Bureau and in July 2003, this department was separated to establish the Bureau of Examination and Educational Quality Verification. The Bureau of Examination and Educational Quality Verification is a governing body specialized in examination and education quality verification nationwide, implementing the examinations and quality verification and degree approval. The Bureau of Examination and Educational Quality Verification is the advisory body at the highest level to build, in general, the quality guaranty system and mechanism in the national education system, and particularly in higher education training.

Along with the foundation of the Bureau of Examination and Educational Quality Verification, universities with their authorities, established quality guaranty agencies. Ha

Noi National University and Ho Chi Minh city National University are the first two universities with their specialized units responsible for quality guaranty following modern management models.

Along with the foundation of quality guaranty system, defining the quality guaranty mechanism with specific criteria was established. On April 28th, 2004, the Ministry of Education and Training enforced the instruction N^o. 25/2004/CT-BGD&ĐT on the responsibilities of the education department and proposed the need to continuously innovate the programs, contents and teaching method in higher education with specific solutions. These solutions included urgently building a scaffolding program, promoting to build a suitable program for the scaffolding program enforced to foster the content innovation, training method in accordance with the standardization, modernization to be suitable with the country reality and national integration. Referring to the quality guaranty, the instruction clearly pointed out the need to enhance the quality management for the education and training, urgently build and perfect the organization, mechanism and bring the examination and educational quality verification system into action in all educational organizations.

Subsequently, on December 2nd, 2004, the Ministry of Education and Training enforced a temporary Regulation on quality verification in universities, assigning purposes, process and standards of quality verification in universities, council of quality verification, self-evaluation and mutual evaluation, verification result approval. Temporary regulation on quality verification in universities was enforced after nearly 2 years of draft and survey from universities, national and international specialists. This regulation marked the first time Vietnam education in higher education having a quality standard package with specific, clear, manifest criteria, specifically defining the requirements on quality in higher education including missions, objectives, training program management and other activities in a Vietnam University.

On the basis of the Temporary Regulation on quality verification in universities, from 2006, the Ministry of Education and Training directed 20 universities nationwide to evaluate according to the enforced criteria. Through the pilot evaluation in universities, the Ministry of Education and Training attained experience, made supplement, corrected and perfected the official criteria package. On November 1st, 2007, the Ministry of Education and Training handed out the Decision N^o. 65/QĐ-BGDĐT on the Regulation on *Criteria of higher educational quality evaluation* including 10 criteria as follows:

1. Missions and goals of Universities
2. Management
3. Educational Programs
4. Training operations
5. Managing staff, teachers, and employees
6. Learners
7. Scientific research, technology applications, development and handing over.
8. International cooperation affairs

9. Libraries, study facilities

10. Finance and finance management

It can be stated that 10 criteria above embraced all operations of a Vietnam University. The criteria were not as much different as those of other universities in the region and in the world. With this criteria package, Vietnam higher education had an apparent system and mechanism to manage the university quality. This was not only a dramatic step in higher education quality management, but also showed the strong resolution of integration of our country education into the global context.

In 2008, the quality evaluation in 20 universities which was implemented in models on the first stage finished. With the achieved results, the Ministry of Education and Training announced the achievements to label the universities as well as foster the verification widely. The academic year 2009-2010 was considered as “an educational quality evaluation school year”. The Ministry of Education and Training closely guided the quality verification which aimed at the following achievements: there would be 80% universities and 50% colleges evaluated by 2010. By 2015, there would be 90% universities, colleges verified at least once and by 2020, there would be 90% verified at least twice. The Ministry of Education and Training also encouraged universities to sign up for verification by international verification organizations.

Along with fostering verification at universities, The Ministry of Education and Training continued to perfect the legal documents system and develop the higher education quality verification system to evaluate qualified training organizations and higher education programs, contributing to the guaranty and enhancement of higher education quality. In May, 2008, The Ministry of Education and Training enforced the policy on fostering training qualification evaluation and verification, proposing the main responsibilities which were enhancing the awareness for staff, teachers on the educational quality evaluation and verification, fostering the propaganda, developing specialists, encouraging for evaluation and verification, building and reinforcing verification organizations, implementing on verification in all universities, colleges, implementing on management hierarchy, and widening international cooperation in quality evaluation and verification.

In December 2012, The Ministry of Education and Training enforced the Regulation on process and circulation of education quality verification in universities, colleges, vocational colleges and Regulation on higher education quality verification staff. Subsequently, as the role of the highest authority, the Bureau of Educational Testing and Quality Verification guided universities, colleges, vocational colleges how to implement the self-evaluation strategies and process with following steps: establishing the evaluation council, self-evaluation plan, collecting proofs, processing, analyzing information and proofs, reporting on self-evaluation, forms of reports, and post-evaluation, etc.

It can be stated that, with the establishment of the national rank quality guaranty and the vertical system for quality guaranty (the Bureau of Educational Testing and Quality Verification, quality guaranty centers and institutes), along with setting up the regulations higher education quality verification, widely promoting higher education verification plan,

higher education guaranty made an unprecedented progress in Vietnam education history. In spite of some limitations (that is, lack of independent quality guaranty, in some training organizations, the quality verification was still passive, not an internal need with the purpose of quality improvement), the early achievements on system, mechanism on specialist qualification and quality verification human resources stated the strong trend of integration of Vietnam Education.

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- Email: thinhpv@tdmu.edu.vn