

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE AND EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

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Abstract

The paper have answered the research questions: What is the relationship between governance and quality assurance (QA) in highe education institution (HEI)? What good practices are there to concretize the roles and functions of the University Council (UC) in the work of QA? We agreed that in pricipal, UC is responsible for university governance activities in line with the HEI's development strategy with 4 important areas of work: Determining vision, mission, cultural values; Building development strategies and policies including QA policies; Mobilizing resources inside and outside the institution including investment; and risk management. QA is one of the strategic contents and therefore is one of the most important policies. Self-assessment of educational quality is a tool for implementing accountability, one of the contents of governance, and also a condition for HEI to implement autonomy. Educational quality accreditation is a tool for the State and society to monitor HEIs in implementing national educational goals and assigned autonomy; it is a measure to protect consumers - students in the process of developing market-oriented HE.

Keywords: University Council, university governance, educational quality assurance, higher education.

Mối quan hệ giữa quản trị đại học và đảm bảo chất lượng giáo dục

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Tóm tắt

Bài báo đã trả lời các câu hỏi nghiên cứu: Mối quan hệ giữa quản trị và bảo đảm chất lượng (BĐCL) trong cơ sở giáo dục đại học là gì? Có những thông lệ tốt nào để cụ thể hóa vai trò và chức năng của Hội đồng trường (HĐT) trong công tác BĐCL? Chúng tôi thống nhất rằng, về nguyên tắc, HĐT chịu trách nhiệm về các hoạt động quản trị đại học theo chiến lược phát triển của nhà trường với 4 lĩnh vực quan trọng: Xác định tầm nhìn, sứ mệnh, Giá trị văn hóa; Xây dựng chiến lược và chính sách phát triển, bao gồm các chính sách BĐCL; Huy động các nguồn lực trong và ngoài trường, bao gồm cả đầu tư và quản lý rủi ro. BĐCL là một trong những nội dung chiến lược, và do đó, là một trong những chính sách quan trọng nhất. Tự đánh giá chất lượng giáo dục là một công cụ để thực hiện trách nhiệm giải trình, một trong những nội dung của quản trị và cũng là điều kiện để trường đại học thực hiện quyền tự chủ. Kiểm định chất lượng giáo dục là công cụ để Nhà nước và xã hội giám sát các trường đại học trong việc thực hiện các mục tiêu giáo dục quốc gia và quyền tự chủ được giao, là biện pháp bảo vệ người tiêu dùng - sinh viên trong quá trình phát triển theo định hướng thị trường.

Từ khóa: Hội đồng trường, quản trị đại học, bảo đảm chất lượng giáo dục, giáo dục đại học.

1. Introduction

In a university, the University Council (UC) assumes the role of governance which is the activity of making decisions on the direction of the Higher education institution (HEI) such as monitoring, strategic planning, decision-making, and financial planning and risk prevention. In the field of strategic planning, the UC is responsible for outlining the mission, values, vision and development strategy to bring sustainable value to shareholders in the short and long term. The UC is responsible for creating the regulations of the HEI, which is a set of core regulations on the organizational structure and operations of the HEI. Based on demands, the UC creates and approves major policies for the HEI. The UC has also the role of monitoring and risk management. In a non perfect institution, the UC is intended to be the check and direction for staff and all aspects of the institution's operations. That is why the Council is ultimately responsible if they fail to exercise due diligence in their oversight duties. All HEI are exposed to known and unknown risks. Technology has made risk more pervasive and permeate business operations. Council members practice good governance when they oversee risk and establish a risk appetite for the HEI.

These are the basic principles of the governance role in a university. However, in practice, detailed role-sharing frameworks within higher education institutions (HEIs) lack clarity, leading to frequent confusion during implementation. This article focuses on answering the research questions: What is the relationship between university governance and quality assurance (QA)? What is the role and function of UC in the work of total quality management and what good practices are there to concretize these activities?

2. Five Basic Arguments

To answer the above research questions, I propose five basic arguments:

First, QA is one of the strategic contents of primary importance in the HEI. The Fourth Industrial Revolution, driven by rapid advances in robotics, artificial intelligence (AI) and other emerging technologies, has created a skills gap in all socio-economic sectors. This reality forces universities to review and re-evaluate their teaching programs, thinking development, learning services, expected learning outcomes to keep up with the growing workforce to ensure students are ready to participate in the job market. Higher education (HE) is also pursuing a comprehensive approach to educating the generation of global citizens - liberal education. That is what belongs to the goal of modern HE. Meeting that goal is the quality of HE (Dang, 2023).

Second, policy making is one of the contents of university governance. Among the policies of a HEI, there must be policies on education, training, community engagement and service, resource development, risk management and building an internal QA system. Each HEI in different contexts and conditions needs to have different policies for each of the above areas to realize goals, vision and mission of the University. Different from compliance, regulations, statutes, rules, standards, guidelines, practices, ... the policy system is built to promote activities in the fields, promote innovation and implement autonomy and accountability of the HEI. The governance model chosen by the UC will prescribe the way of making policy decisions; prescribe the monitoring of policy implementation, review, evaluation and improvement.

Third, self-assessment of educational quality is a tool for implementing accountability, one of the contents of governance, and also a condition

for institutions to implement autonomy. University autonomy always goes hand in hand with strengthening the capacity for responsibility and accountability of HEIs. Historically, universities have always been subject to some kind of control and have undergone periodic reforms, and this procedure is undoubtedly a form of “accountability” (Altbach et. al, 2009). While “autonomy” is an inherent feature of traditional concepts of HEI, “accountability” is a principle related to innovation. Determining how these two issues can be reconciled for the greater good of universities and important goals of national development, is an interesting challenge for the contemporary academic world. “Accountability” can include but not limited in 4 main areas: i) Teaching quality (van Dijk et. al, 2020); ii) Transparency of output; iii) Financial transparency and iv) Financial support for students (Dang, 2007). The point to emphasize here is that while developing countries talk and discuss a lot about university autonomy, in developed countries people talk a lot about the accountability and responsibility of universities.

Fourth, educational quality accreditation is a tool for the State and society to monitor universities in implementing national educational goals and assigned autonomy. In the role-playing table of the Vietnamese HE QA system, accreditation and recognition are the link between the internal and external QA. External QA includes but is not limited to the stages: standard setting, auditing, and quality estimation of the University according to standards, in which standard setting - building a set of standards for assessing educational quality - at the national level is the responsibility of the State, and is also a tool to control universities in a non-institutional context. The State, through the Department of Quality Management, also guides and directs the accreditation activities.

Fifth, QA is a measure to protect consumers - students in the process of developing market-oriented HE. Analyzing the impact of the market economy on HE, Dang Ung Van (2007) suggested that "Unifying the new concept of quality, institutionalizing the principles, criteria and assessment and inspection processes, and organizing management work based on a suitable and effective model will have an important impact, overcoming shortcomings, directly contributing to improving the quality of education to meet the requirements of the country's industrialization and modernization, and protecting consumers - students under the impact of the market mechanism. The quality management model for our country should be based on five criteria:

i) allow research to set out strategic goals of education in each period based on the country's socio-economic development level;

ii) ensure that everyone, at any time, in any position, is the quality manager of the assigned work and completes it in the best way in the process of continuous improvement, inheritance, and accumulation to achieve the goal of meeting the requirements of society with the highest quality;

iii) meet the needs of democratizing education; teachers need to play the role of the subject in managing the quality of education; the State and management agencies at all levels will only play the role of guiding, coordinating and inspecting QA and assessment activities in the entire system;

iv) mobilize social intelligence to participate in managing the quality of education through participating and regularly proposing requirements for education; directly manage the quality of educational products, pay full attention to the learners' individual capacity development.

3. Applying University Governance to Quality Assurance

As previously discussed, University governance is closely aligned with development strategy of higher education institutions (HEIs) and encompasses four key areas of work: Defining vision, mission, cultural values; formulating development strategies and policies; Mobilizing resources including investment and risk management; and fostering innovation. So which of these 4 areas of work is the most important? Among these areas, the formulation of development strategies and policies is paramount. This is crucial because it operationalizes the institution's vision, implements its mission, and promotes the cultural values of faculty, staff, and students. Effective strategy development also necessitates resource mobilization and sound risk management to mitigate unforeseen challenges. Furthermore, continuous innovation is essential; without it, an institution risks falling behind its competitors. Consequently, building a development strategy and policy for institution innovation is the core task of the UC, which is: managing innovation without interfering with the existing work of the Principal in academic and administrative management. They are the highest scientists and educators in the HEI and hold the traditional role of the Principal in the long history of global HE development.

3.1. Strategic Management

First of all, the work of the UC requires the UC to apply university governance in building the development strategy of the HEI. On that basis, the UC assigns the Principal to develop strategic plans (long-term), short-term and medium-term plans with KPIs, and at the same time review and improve the planning process and KPIs to successfully implement the strategic goals of the institution (Standard 4, Set

of Standards for assessing the quality of HEI). When building a development strategy for the HEI, it is necessary to fully assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges (SWOT analysis).

Vietnam's HE has many great opportunities in the coming period. Our country's economy is developing at a high growth rate, not only in GDP but also in terms of level. The higher the level of economic development, the greater the demand for highly qualified human resources. This is a valuable opportunity for the HE system. Society's expectations for the training products of prestigious universities are not only excellent employees but also those with an entrepreneurial spirit to be their own boss, to bring jobs to others and improve the development level of the economy. The challenges that universities need to consider for building the development strategy include but not limited to i) the decline in the attractiveness of HE to the younger generation, ii) the inherent conservatism of education, iii) limited investment in HE, iv) globalization and competition from foreign universities when opening up the Vietnamese HE market.

The attractiveness of HE to the younger generation is declining. There are two factors affecting this balance. First, it is not easy for graduates to find jobs suitable for their training. The salary paid to graduates is low, not enough to live on, not to mention having to pay off bank loans to study. Since we expanded the scale of university training, opened many new institutions (both private and public), entering to university has become easy, no longer a dream and pride of students. Second, the consumption of HE products in the economy is not high (at a mass level). Growth relies on cheap labor and dependent industries, processing and assembly with mainly small and medium enterprises (excluding FDI with their own human

resource needs). Consequently, the demand for skilled human resources is diverse and varies across many levels, with university-educated professionals not being the primary focus.

It is a fact that, whenever there is a demand for a certain profession from the national labour market, many universities compete to open an adapt training program leading to a rapid saturation of trained human resources. As a result, enrollment declined in subsequent academic years. Generally, at national level, the balance of supply and demand has shifted from demand exceeding supply to supply exceeding demand in scale but demand exceeding supply in quality. Therefore, it is necessary to impact this balance of supply and demand in the direction of stimulating demand for HE products. How to make training products more attractive to learners and employers as well? Innovating both the intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning methods, conducting authentic assessments of the graduates' abilities is what should be done (instead of marketing efforts as at present). This will not only benefit the HEI but also society will have human resources to meet development needs.

To do so, *innovation is required*, however, faces *the inherent conservatism of education*, including the teaching staff who are reluctant to change what has long been a source of pride in their academic qualifications and teaching philosophy. Therefore, we need to create an ecosystem for innovative HEI.

Just like in nature, the Ecosystem of HEI is a complete open system consisting of living components: staff, lecturers, employees, learners and other components such as learning materials, infrastructure and teaching and learning equipment including information technology. Because it is an open system, it needs to exchange both material, energy and spirit with the community in

which it exists. A sustainable HE ecosystem is a system that contains continuous and harmonious flows/exchanges between educational subjects, between educational subjects and the educational environment, that is, inside and outside the institution. All input factors will affect the output. All environmental factors including stakeholders have an impact on growth and the learning process. If any stage in the exchange process is interrupted, the ecosystem will decline and be at risk of being broken.

That is in theory. In fact, the current set of standards for assessing the quality of HEIs and training programs requires institutions to always maintain these exchanges with stakeholders in particular and the community in general. A very important factor in the HE ecosystem is the State. The State is one of the stakeholders of universities but a special stakeholder. The exchange between the State and universities is currently mainly one-way: the State orders, the State makes policies, the State makes regulations, the State supervises... Increasing the exchange in the opposite direction through promoting coordination between policy makers and universities in HE policy research will certainly promote the construction of an ecosystem for sustainable and autonomous HE.

Investment in HE is not commensurate with scale and quality. No country is able to subsidize their entire HE system. Because HE is no longer a social welfare like universal education and other educational segments. HE is linked to employment and is considered a place for investment (Marx, 1845) by the State, individuals and society. At present Vietnamese Government still promotes the socialization of education, more precisely, continues to mobilize social resources to develop HE: human, material and financial resources. Strong private enterprises have invested in the private HE system and have

achieved encouraging results. Now there needs to be a satisfactory policy mechanism so that society can invest in public universities not for the purpose of making a profit on the tuition fees of students (Marx, 1845).

Globalization is an irreversible trend. Nearly 30 years ago, at the International Networking: Education, Training and Change Conference, Australian scholars talked about the policy of developing the education market, not domestically but targeting the youth of countries in the Asian region who tend to want to get a university degree from developed countries in the hope of gaining an advantage in finding a job compared to graduates from domestic universities, especially children of wealthy or middle-class families. Governments of developed countries, whether they want it or not, have supported this trend by expanding funding sources such as AUSAID, creating a positive image of their country's education system, with the advantage of English, attracting young people from countries in the region. As a result, the wave of studying abroad in developed countries has increased to the point where the income of universities is much larger than the budget that the Government spends on scholarships for foreign students.

Moreover, Australia is also one of the leading countries to open university branches in Vietnam, typically RMIT. After having a firm foothold in Ho Chi Minh City, it has now organized and implemented in Hanoi. The trend of expanding the education market abroad is also seen in Malaysia and Singapore. That situation puts Vietnamese universities in a fiercely competitive reality. Vietnamese universities are bound by both training content, tuition ceilings, and spiritual and legal responsibilities, while foreign universities are free in both programs and tuition fees, and it can be said that they are

not bound by any constraints on Vietnamese families and young people.

3.2. Regarding the Policy System

The policy contents that need to be focused on include but are not limited to:

Regarding training, there is an educational philosophy, academic freedom, ethical codes, admissions, class size, teaching and learning, student assessment, credit system, graduation requirements, etc.

In building and designing a curriculum based on the outcomes. The curriculum of HEIs is the core factor in creating a high-quality workforce for society and the capacity of graduates and is a measure of the academic quality and training reputation of universities. Therefore, HE institutions need to have policies to develop and enhance the capacity of their teaching staff in designing and improving curricula based on intended learning outcomes to have training programs that are unique, attractive to learners and employers, and equip students with the necessary competencies to meet the future working environment (Trow, 2010).

Innovating teaching, learning and assessment methods in the context of the 4.0 industrial revolution, especially modernizing the learning of the younger generation in the direction of individualization to arouse the potential in each student and trainee so that they are passionate about learning, have the capacity for lifelong learning and career development. Adaptation and acceptance of proactive learning methods by learners have become an inevitable trend in HE today.

The space and time of learners' learning have changed dramatically, no longer limited to lecture halls and books. Learners can learn from anywhere, anytime and from everyone. Therefore, HE institutions need to innovate their thinking and perception, invest in advanced

and modern teaching technologies, apply AI and virtual reality technology on the basis of promoting digital transformation to meet the requirements of modern teaching and learning and the learning needs of learners.

Regarding scientific research, there are research ethics, conflicts of interest, intellectual property, health and safety, research collaboration partners, etc... Research and innovation are the foundation for lifelong learning skills and entrepreneurship of learners. To do so, universities need to promote and invest appropriately in scientific research and entrepreneurship of learners.

Regarding community engagement and service, there are policies on student support services, community engagement, volunteer activities, information security, accommodation, job placement, etc. Community engagement is a new concept introduced to our country. In the relationship and interaction between the University and the community, there are the following forms:

- Service learning, which are methods that combine learning goals and community service in a way that can simultaneously enhance both student development and community benefits;
- Community outreach - the provision of professional services, or services with specific expertise, to a group of people who may not have access to such services;
- Volunteerism;
- Community-based research, is a participatory approach in which research projects are driven by community priorities and communities are involved throughout the entire research process: from writing project proposals to analyzing results to taking action using research findings.

3.3. Regarding the policy system

The policy contents that need to be focused on include but are not limited to follows. First,

regarding training, there is an educational philosophy, policy on academic freedom, ethical codes, admissions, class size, teaching and learning, student assessment, credit system, graduation requirements, etc.

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In the context of the 4.0 industrial revolution, innovating teaching, learning and assessment methods especially modernizing the learning of the younger generation in the direction of individualization could arouse the potential in each student and trainee so that they are passionate about learning, have the capacity for lifelong learning and career development. Adaptation and acceptance of proactive learning methods by learners have become an inevitable trend in HE today.

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Community engagement remains a core element of Progressive Education and has taken on new significance in the context of concerns for today's HEIs. When discussing community engagement and service, it is important to distinguish between three concepts: community engagement is the engagement of stakeholders in the teaching and other activities of the university, in a way that benefits both the community and the university. Community service is work done

to help others without being paid. Community consulting involves providing professional services or advice to an external partner for a fee or other non-monetary payment. All of these ideas need to be translated into HEI's policy.

3.4. Resource Mobilization

The HE landscape is changing rapidly around the world. Many autonomous universities are no longer receiving as much government funding as they did before. The education market is being affected from all sides by social, technological and financial changes, along with curriculum, teaching and learning methods, learning locations and times, and student support. In response to the above trends, HE institutions are making changes in their decision-making processes, opening up the education, exploring new business models and resource mobilization, and orienting brand values for the institution.

State investment in HE is not the biggest challenge. The 20% budget for education is high, but it cannot prioritize HE compared to other educational fields such as universal education, education for remote areas, etc. In addition, the state budget is contributed by taxpayers. We can only change the mechanism of state funding but cannot spend arbitrarily. However, we still have ways to mobilize social resources as private universities have done, and public universities have the capacity to bring in large non-tuition revenues from community service activities and technology transfer, etc.

One of the solutions to mobilize resources from society is to engage and serve the community, which has been expanded to become the third mission of universities. Kwiek (2012) provides a list of five dimensions of the third mission including: i) regional mission, i.e. becoming a cultural-scientific center of the locality and surrounding region; ii) academic entrepreneurship as "a process

of seeking financial capacity and autonomy through non-state income”; iii) “social service” to meet economic and social needs, whether it is in terms of skilled workforce, policy advice, solution-oriented research or solutions to socio-economic problems; iv) civic mission and v) innovation.

Globally, today, the contributions of universities to the environment and communities in which they operate go beyond the traditional teaching and research missions. Therefore, university standards need to be developed and revised. The idea of third mission (Szadkowski, 2013) has incorporated by Vietnamese Government into the Quality Assessment Criteria for HEIs. However, the Vietnamese teaching staff and managers have not yet had the necessary changes in awareness to: i) fully distinguish the difference between training and research on the one hand and service and community engagement on the other; ii) thoroughly understand the trend of public universities being given autonomy to move towards entrepreneurship is a reality and is increasingly used as a development model to implement reforms to turn "universities into the driving force of the socio - economy development".

3.5. Risk management

Being embedded in a market economy, the risks of HEIs are almost inevitable. Private teaching and learning organizations are very unstable. The stability of public HEIs also increases once they fully enter the market, and therefore, like businesses, must take certain risks. However, HEIs themselves find it difficult to accept risks, because education is a career that does not allow for regret and failure,

and is also a career that cannot be returned. The price to pay for failure is not only extremely high but also irreparable. Risk management is an unavoidable task of the UC.

Threats and risks come from many different sources. For HEIs, there are risks related to reputation, operations, legal, human capital, business model and finance. To minimize these risks, institutions need a systematic and methodical risk management process. The goal of risk management is to ensure that the organization is able to recognize and deal with potential risks, thereby minimizing damage and enhancing operational efficiency.

4. Conclusion

We have answered the research questions: What is the relationship between university governance and QA? The roles and functions of the UC in the work of QA, and what good practices are there to concretize these roles? In principal, The UC therefore is responsible for university governance activities in line with the HEI's development strategy with 4 important areas of work: Determining vision, mission, cultural values; Building development strategies and policies including QA policies; Mobilizing resources inside and outside the institution including investment; and risk management. QA is one of the strategic contents and therefore is one of the most important policies. Self-assessment of educational quality is a tool for implementing accountability, one of the contents of governance, and also a condition for institutions to implement autonomy. Educational quality accreditation is a tool for the State and society to monitor universities in implementing national educational goals and assigned autonomy; it is a measure to protect consumers - students in the process of developing market-oriented HE.

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