

General Education Teacher Training Quality Assurance In Vietnamese Universities According To Aun-Qa Approach

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Abstract

To improve the quality of training, teacher training universities must organize the training process according to international and regional standards. This study analyzed three models of quality assurance in training at universities. On that basis, the author determines that the quality assurance model according to AUN-QA is suitable for teacher training in Vietnam. Experimental results 6 solutions applying the quality assurance model according to AUN-QA are appropriate and necessary. Research results have opened a new direction in teacher training of universities.

Keywords: AUN-QA; University; Vietnam; teacher; quality assurance

Introduction

Quality assurance is commonly described, in a broad sense, as “policies and procedures toward ensuring quality maintenance and enhancement”. In a narrower sense, viewing quality as the satisfaction of certain standards in addition to the achievement of institutional goals, Martin and Stella define quality assurance as “policies and mechanisms developed within an institution or programmed to ensure that it is following its own purposes and meeting the standards applicable to higher education, in general, or to the profession or discipline, in particular” (Martin & Stella, 2007) General education teacher training activities conducted by Vietnamese universities are quite different from those in other countries. Aiming at higher training quality, it is required for general education teacher training institutions to develop international and regional-standard training procedures. This is a long-term and time-consuming process with a system of steps organized in different priorities, on top of which is quality assurance (QA). It is both an orientation and a direct motivation of innovation to improve the quality of teacher training amid stricter requirements of international integration.

Literature Review On General Education Teacher Training Quality Assurance According To The Aun – Qa Approach *Current models of training quality assurance at universities in the world*

There are currently many different models of

quality assurance in higher education worldwide. However, accreditation, assessment and audit are the three most popular models of quality assurance today.

2.1. Quality accreditation

First applied in the US more than 100 years ago, quality accreditation is currently the most widely used in higher education systems. According to Vlăsceanu et al., quality accreditation involves a process by which a public or non-public or private body conducts an assessment of an educational institution or programme to formally recognize its achievement of minimum established standards or criteria. The outcome of accreditation is a decision to recognize pass or fail (yes or no) and a certificate specifying the validity period.

Quality accreditation is usually a three-step process: (1) self-assessment of the educational institution; (2) external assessment by an external audit team selected by the accreditation body, and (3) review of the results of the review council.

There are two types of quality accreditation: institution accreditation (university accreditation) and programme accreditation (training course/discipline). In institution accreditation, the entire operation of a higher education institution is reviewed and evaluated using a set of institution accreditation standards. Programme accreditation is to examine and evaluate a part of a higher education institution directly relevant to a programme of a particular training course/discipline provided by such institution, with a focus on professional activities. A set of

programme accreditation standards can be developed for multiple training programmes or a specific training programme.

2.2. Quality assessment

From the viewpoint of Woodhouse, quality assessment is the process whose outcomes are quantified by scores (expressed as numbers (e.g., 1 to 4), percentages, and grades (e.g. A to F) or descriptions (e.g. excellent, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory). Quality assessment specifies a pass/fail limit on a range of scores (or simply a 2-score scale)

According to Seameo Rihed, quality assessments analyze outputs, and, therefore, often consider performance metrics presented in a quantitative form. The outcome of a training quality assessment is a certificate of achievement or an external assessment report

Like quality accreditation, the quality assessment also comprises: institution assessment and programme evaluation. There are different models of institution assessment, one of which is AUN-QA.

2.3. Quality audit

Quality audit is a relatively special approach to quality assurance. Different from accreditation or assessment that focuses on quality or performance metrics, quality audit examines quality assurance mechanisms.

Woodhouse suggests that quality audit verifies the following 3 matters:

- Conformity of quality assurance processes with the set objectives;
- Compliance with planned quality assurance procedures;
- Effectiveness of activities to achieve the set goals.

In addition, the following similarities and differences among accreditation, assessment and audit have been analyzed by Woodhouse:

(1) For having common points, all three models of quality assurance, namely accreditation, assessment and audit can be combined or integrated with each other. An attempt to give an exact definition or absolute distinction among these three models just makes it more confusing and complicated as most of them are related to a review or evaluation process.

(2) Nonetheless, differences among them can be found in the process or outcomes.

The outcomes of accreditation and assessment can be the same (pass/fail and a certificate). They are

mostly different in their focus. Accreditation focuses on considering the satisfaction of the minimum standards while assessment focuses on analyzing the outcomes.

Quality audit is different from accreditation and assessment in its subject matter. The subject matter of accreditation and assessment is the quality while that of audit is the quality generation process. Consequently, it brings about a different outcome that focuses on description and recommendations while that of accreditation or assessment is recognition (pass/fail) or a score and certificate.

In short, accreditation, assessment and audit are the three most commonly used models of quality assurance in higher education systems worldwide today. They are all aimed at quality maintenance and enhancement. However, each has its own characteristics, processes, outcomes, strengths, advantages, as well as limitations. The successful application of each model depends on various factors such as the national context, culture, or the evolution of the higher education system. A model may work well in one country but may be unsuccessfully deployed in another. Therefore, careful research on models and characteristics of the country, the education system and each type of educational institution should be carried out to effectively apply these quality assurance models.

2.4. Current ASEAN University Network-Quality Assurance model (AUN-QA)

ASEAN University Network (AUN) is a successful effort of Southeast Asian countries, among other things, to promote higher education in the region. Established in 1995, AUN aims at strengthening cooperation among Southeast Asian universities; promoting learning, research and training programmes in priority areas of Southeast Asia; boosting up cooperation and solidarity among scholars, educators and researchers in member universities of Southeast Asia; and becoming a higher educational policy-oriented agency in Southeast Asia.

- 1) The concept of quality: AUN (2009) believes that quality is the responsibility of the university. Higher education institutions are primarily responsible for setting quality and ensuring quality assurance.
- 2) AUN-QA's principle is internal quality assurance with the following criteria:
 - 1) Having an internal quality assurance system with policies and implementation procedures in place;
 - 2) Carrying out the periodic approval, monitoring and review of programmes;
 - 3) Developing and implementing strategies to constantly enhance the quality of education;
 - 4) Maintaining a mechanism of quality assurance for

teachers; 5) Publicizing, in an accurate and update manner, information about the university, programmes and qualifications conferred; 6) Periodically carrying out quality assurance activities (universities and programmes); 7) Having beneficiaries participate in the development of standards and criteria; 8) Having standards and criteria publicly announced and stably used; 9) Deploying an auditor review process to avoid conflicts of interest; 10) Conducting assessment activities including university self-assessment, external assessment by a group of experts and field surveys agreed upon by both parties; disclosure of external assessment reports including decisions and recommendations of competent authorities; a follow-up process to assess the extent to which the university complies with recommendations; and a mechanism to receive and handle complaints and denunciations.

3) Quality assurance model

AUN has offered a quality assurance model with levels of strategy (institutional level quality assurance), system (internal quality assurance) and performance (programme quality assurance)

Institutional level quality assurance starts from the needs of stakeholders, which are transformed into the university's strategic quality assurance system. Strategic quality assurance is transformed into systematic quality assurance (or internal quality assurance system) and performance quality assurance in training, scientific research, community service and strategic areas determined by the university. This will drive the university's outcomes which are in turn used as feedback to strengthen, on an ongoing basis, quality assurance systems, and meet stakeholders' needs. It is vital for universities to continually seek best practices to be excellent in training, scientific research and community service.

The AUN-QA framework for institutional level, version 2, was re-designed as a transnational quality assurance framework to support the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and uphold the exchange of students and teachers, and educational internationalization, as well. It is equivalent to Principle 3 - Internal Quality Assurance of the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (AQAF), Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015 - Part 1) and the Baldrige Excellence Framework (in Education - 2015/16).

Systematic level (internal quality assurance)

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AUN-QA has developed a set of standards/criteria for internal quality assurance system accreditation for AUN's member universities. Hence, internal quality assurance standards/criteria must align with external requirements and international developments. That is, it is necessary to strictly rely on quality accreditation standards/criteria to establish the internal quality assurance activities of the universities in a specific and detailed way. This direction is followed in this dissertation. Using AUN-QA assessment model for systematic level - internal quality assurance (2005) and AUN-QA framework for institutional level, version 2 (2016), based on a comparison of the former and the new models, along with criteria, internal quality assurance activities and a corresponding set of criteria was built.

Programme level (performance)

In 2005, AUN-QA issued a set of standards/criteria for programme quality assessment, regardless of disciplines and majors, comprising 18 standards concretized into 74 criteria. After 6 years of application in assessing the quality of programmes provided by AUN's member universities, in June 2011, it was revised to issue a new version (Version 2.0) consisting of 15 standards with 68 criteria. Its version 3.0 comprising 11 standards with 50 criteria was issued by AUN-QA in October 2015.

External and internal assessments can be deployed at all three strategic, systematic and performance levels.

- Internal quality assurance (Internal QA): it ensures that a higher education institution, system or programme has policies and mechanisms in place to meet its goals and standards.
- External quality assurance (External QA): it is performed by an agency or individuals outside the higher education institution. Reviewers will assess the institution's performance, system, or programmes to determine whether the institution, system, or programme meets the agreed or given standards.

An internal QA system is an overall system in which resources and information are used to develop, maintain, and improve quality, and to maintain and enhance standards in teaching, research, and community service.

AUN-QA also holds that the internal quality assurance system is a system in which managers and teachers use management mechanisms to maintain and improve quality. "Quality assurance means the systematic, structured and continuous attention to quality in terms of maintaining and improving quality. Continuous quality care is sine

qua non for quality assurance. It is necessary to have a good internal quality assurance system". Long-term efforts are required to ensure quality assurance in universities. For external quality accreditation or recognition, quality must first be established and reached to a certain level. The problem is how quality is improved and recognized to meet accreditation standards. To do so, universities need to have an internal quality assurance system to carry out quality assurance activities and take good care of their own training quality. The internal quality assurance system is fundamentally characterized by its function to enable the university to pay systematic, structured and continuous attention to quality in terms of both quality maintenance and quality improvement. The necessary contents of quality assurance activities in a university rely a lot on the activities that have been conducted at the institutional, national and regional scales. Nonetheless, there are some core activities with an indispensable role in the quality assurance system including examining, monitoring, assessing, ensuring, maintaining and improving the quality of specific procedures and processes. These contents may change over time, according to the perception of the community and educators, as well as the socio-cultural background.

In the quality assurance system of a university, internal quality assurance is developed and performed according to the university's mission and the framework of the national quality assurance standards as well as the current context and conditions of the university. Furthermore, apart from the effects of external quality assurance agencies or national quality assurance, universities still have to ensure their quality assurance meets or aims to meet regional and international standards for diverse modes of training, ranking improvement, academic exchange, cultural exchange, and exchange of teachers and students.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- 3.1. *Literature review:* A literature review was carried out to generalize models of quality assurance in teacher training in global universities and AUN-QA standard-based quality assurance
- 3.2. A survey was done to test AUN-QA standard-based teacher training quality assurance solutions that were built. The survey concentrated on two questions:

First, are the proposed solutions really necessary for the AUN-QA standard-oriented training quality assurance of pedagogical universities/majors today?

Second: are the proposed solutions feasible to ensure the training quality assurance of pedagogical universities/majors in current conditions?

- 3.3. Experiment of solutions: Capacity-building training for staff and specialists in training quality assurance of pedagogical universities/majors according to the AUN-QA approach.

- a. *Development of a set of criteria*
- b. *Experimental site*

Pedagogical universities/majors: Thai Nguyen University of Education, Hanoi National University of Education, Hanoi Pedagogical University 2, Vinh University, Hue University of Education and Dong Thap University.

- c. *Experimental time*
 - Semester 2 of the academic year 2020-2021: Input survey and first experiment.
 - Semester 1 of the academic year 2021-2022: Second experiment
- d. *Samples*

The samples of the experimental population are 421 staff and specialists of departments, Quality Assurance Centers, Deans or Vice Deans in charge of Quality Assurance; Quality Assurance Assistants; Heads of teacher training majors of the foregoing universities/majors.

Table 1: Table of Experimental Population

Group	Universities/majors	Số lượng nghiệm thể				Σ
		Function room	Quality Assurance Centers	Heads of teacher training	Quality Assurance Assistants	
Compare (211)	Hanoi National University of Education	30	25	15	15	75
	Hue University of Education	21	25	12	12	70
	Dong Thap University	20	20	13	13	66
Experiment (210)	Hanoi Pedagogical University 2	26	25	10	10	71
	Thai Nguyen University of Education	20	20	10	10	60
	Vinh University	26	25	14	14	79

RESEARCH RESULTS

Six general education teacher training quality

assurance solutions were proposed according to the AUN-QA approach.

Solution 1: Studies and discussions on the necessity of AUN-QA standard-based training quality assurance should be conducted by management staff and members of pedagogical universities/faculties.

Solution 2: Pedagogical universities/faculties should develop a strategic plan on training quality and training quality policies according to the AUN-QA approach.

Solution 3: Pedagogical universities/faculties should complete their internal training quality assurance systems according to the AUN-QA approach

Solution 4: AUN-QA standard-based quality standards should be established as a basis for pedagogical universities/faculties to constantly improve and enhance training quality.

Solution 5: Training quality assurance staff and specialists of pedagogical universities/faculties should be provided with capacity building fostering courses to meet AUN-QA requirements.

Solution 6: A system of AUN-QA standard-based conditions to meet training quality assurance requirements of pedagogical universities/faculties should be established.

3.4. Survey results on the necessity of solutions:

Table 2: Survey results on the necessity of solutions:

TT	Solutions	Necessity of solutions (%)				
		Very necessary	Necessary	Less necessary	Unnecessary	No answer
1	Solution 1	38,1 (90)	46,6 (110)	15,3 (36)	0,0 0	0,0 0
2	Solution 2	39,0 (92)	44,9 (106)	16,1 (38)	0,0 0	0,0 0
3	Solution 3	43,6 (103)	47,9 (113)	8,5 (20)	0,0 0	0,0 0
4	Solution 4	42,8 (101)	47,9 (113)	9,3 (22)	0,0 0	0,0 0
5	Solution 5	49,1 (116)	45,8 (108)	5,1 (12)	0,0 0	0,0 0
6	Solution 6	41,6 (98)	50,8 (120)	7,6 (18)	0,0 0	0,0 0
	\bar{X}	42,4	47,3	10,3	0,0	0,0

3.5. Survey results on the feasibility of solutions:

Table 3: Survey results on the feasibility of solutions

Feasibility of solutions (%)	

TT	Solutions	Very feasible	Feasible	Less Feasible	Not feasible	No answer
1	Solution 1	35,6 (84)	45,8 (108)	18,6 (44)	0,0 0	0,0 0
2	Solution 2	34,7 (82)	45,8 (108)	19,5 (46)	0,0 0	0,0 0
3	Solution 3	42,8 (101)	40,3 (95)	16,9 (40)	0,0 0	0,0 0
4	Solution 4	40,3 (95)	42,8 (101)	16,9 (40)	0,0 0	0,0 0
5	Solution 5	44,9 (106)	43,2 (102)	11,9 (28)	0,0 0	0,0 0
6	Solution 6	38,6 (91)	44,0 (104)	17,4 (41)	0,0 0	0,0 0
	\bar{X}	39,5	43,7	16,8	0,0	0,0

3.6. Test results of the solution “Training quality assurance staff and specialists of pedagogical universities / faculties should be provided with capacity building fostering courses to meet AUN-QA requirements”

Results of the first test on QA staff’s and specialists’ knowledge

Table 4: Distribution of frequency f_i and cumulative frequency $f_{i,t}$ on knowledge of the tested and control groups

Xi	Compare (n = 211)			Experiment (n = 210)		
	Fi	fi	fi,t	Fi	fi	fi,t
4	18	6.83	100	0	-	-
5	35	18.80	93.17	37	14.40	100
6	36	27.35	74.37	38	17.79	85.60
7	46	13.67	47.02	34	20.33	67.81
8	29	16.23	33.35	41	23.72	47.48
9	33	14.52	17.12	40	18.64	23.76
10	14	2.60	2.60	20	5.12	5.12
I	211	100		210		

3.7. Results of the second test on knowledge of QA staff and specialists are shown in the table

Table 5: Table of frequency of the second test results on QA staff’s and specialists’ knowledge

Group	Universities	Amount	Parameters			
			\bar{X}	Variance	Standard deviation	Coefficient of Variation
	Hanoi National University of Education	75	6.80	2.32	1.52	22.35

Com pare	Hue University of Education	70	6.76	2.51	1.58	23.37
	Dong Thap University	66	6.74	1.78	1.33	19.73
	\bar{X}	6.76	2.20	1.47	21.81	
Expe rime nt	Hanoi Pedagogical University 2	71	8.00	1.46	1.21	15.12
	Thai Nguyen University of Education	60	7.89	1.14	1.07	13.56
	Vinh University	79	8.03	1.29	1.13	14.07
	\bar{X}	7.97	1.29	1.17	14.28	

DISCUSSION

AUN-QA model is suitable for the general education teacher training quality assurance in the current period

The topmost thing in university management, in general, and training quality assurance, in particular, is selecting an appropriate model of training quality assurance. It is also of great significance for a higher education institution. A model is considered appropriate when it fits specific conditions of the university's training activities, enabling the university to achieve the general goals and the training goals of specific majors. AUN-QA model is selected for the training quality assurance of pedagogical universities, especially at the systematic level in an internal scope, for the following reasons:

- 1) *AUN-QA model is like the quality assurance models of universities in Southeast Asia and is the basis for Vietnamese universities to gradually integrate into the world.* Approved in 1998 as a quality accreditation standard framework for ASEAN University Network, AUN-QA has been continuously deployed since 1999. AUN-QA's training quality assessment standards and training quality assurance standards have been developed and completed for many years, recognized by various universities in Southeast Asia as well as worldwide.
- 2) *AUN-QA model is closely consistent with the determined concept of pedagogical university's training quality.* Unlike the fixed quality of normal products or services, the training quality of universities is always in a "dynamic" state. *It exists and evolves constantly in educational products - teachers - lively and ever-evolving personalities to meet the increasing demands of general education and social life.* The training quality of pedagogical universities is, hence, a dynamic concept, which always evolves to meet the frequently-changing capacity requirements for training products

according to the training targets, professions, the transformation of the role of workers in the profession and society, the trend of globalization and international integration, etc., of Vietnam's general education.

Pedagogical universities must first pay attention to the "immediate quality" of training products, and then their "long-term quality". That is, they must prepare for graduate teachers to not only have the professional capacity at a high level but also can "develop and perfect" themselves and to "self-change, even create" new future skills, meeting the increasing requirements of the constantly-changing and developing professional activities of modern general education schools. AUN-QA-based quality assurance will support pedagogical universities in pursuing the aforementioned perspective of training quality.

- 3) *The AUN-QA standard-based training quality assurance will enable universities to achieve their training goals.* Since the mission of pedagogical universities is to train high-quality teachers for general education, their training quality will be accurately and clearly reflected through graduates' degree of responsiveness to their own and their families' requirements, and most importantly, the requirements of general education schools.
- 4) Both internal and external assessments can be conducted at all 3 levels of quality assurance according to the AUN-QA approach. However, *AUN-QA's internal and systematic level QA aligns with the viewpoint and approaches of pedagogical universities.* Pedagogical universities themselves need to self-conduct training quality assessment activities to ensure their own quality before external assessments. From the perspective of managers of pedagogical universities, programme-level quality assurance will be the most appropriate since programmes make up the most obvious and urgent element, determining the development direction of the entire major and university system while motivating and setting the innovation requirements for other elements in the system. In addition, teacher training is one among many training activities in many pedagogical institutions nowadays. Training quality assurance focuses on the whole system of the university while the teacher training quality assurance at the programme level need to be considered and practice specifically in the overall training quality assurance activities of the university.

In terms of instructional strategies and assessment practices, quality assurance ensures teaching, learning, and assessment results for the achievement of the desired learning outcomes.

Tran, Nguyen, and Nguyen (2011), however, caution that improving teaching or lecturing techniques of Vietnamese teachers does not necessarily lead to quality student learning. They therefore suggest that conceptual changes are required to enable student-centred approaches to teaching and learning that achieve the expected learning outcomes. Regarding student and supporting activities, there are measures that the initial teacher education programs can undertake to strengthen the quality of student teachers. These include, among others, establishing prerequisites for entry into teacher education programs, and raising the level of prior entrant academic achievement. It was found that in most countries, future teachers are recruited from above-average achievers, and in some countries, from the top 20% of the age cohort (Eurydice, 2006). The quality enhancement of the educational program (i.e. of curriculum, teaching, learning, assessment, students, supporting services, facilities, and infrastructure) was an important QA practice undertaken by the teacher education programs. Ongoing quality development, rather than the mere technical concern of conforming to external standards for accountability, should be the primary goal of quality assurance (Smith & MacGregor, 2009). This quality improvement is enabled through developing internal quality culture that involves the autonomous participation of faculty members (Ezer & Horin, 2013). Partnership and cooperation between teacher education programs and schools in developing the curriculum and providing practical knowledge and teaching experiences are effective measures to better achieve the expected outcomes pertaining to professional competence (Treagust, Won, Peterson, & Wynne, 2015). While quality assurance is still a novel concept in Vietnam's higher education, this study shows that teacher education institutions have embraced quality assurance in their policies and practices. The results also suggest that QA policies and practices among teacher education programs should be improved for greater achievement of expected learning outcomes and satisfaction of stakeholder needs.

CONCLUSIONS

Enhancing the quality of educational human resources toward international standards is an urgent matter, particularly amid the increasingly rapid globalization and robust international integration of socio-economic life. This demand is realized in the system of pedagogical institutions through gradually improving training quality and integrating with international higher

education to affirm their position. For establishing the appropriate degree of integration, pedagogical universities should exercise the training quality assurance under international standards, first, regional standards.

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