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PROBLEMS AND PROGRESSIONS IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT IN VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

Higher education management plays a crucial role in enhancing training quality and ensuring sustainable development. However, globalization and the Fourth Industrial Revolution pose major challenges, including limited funding, outdated infrastructure, and inflexible curricula. To address these, several reforms are needed: 1) Strategic Management: Current university autonomy models are hindered by fragmented administration and weak financial policies. Solutions include building modern governance systems and improving human resources. 2) Financial Management: Most funding comes from the state, with limited alternative income sources. Recommendations include financial self-management, revenue diversification, and transparency. 3) Faculty Management: Many instructors lack doctoral qualifications and are resistant to innovation. Competitive recruitment and HR technology systems are needed. 4) Curriculum Reform: Programs are too theoretical and misaligned with market demands. Updating curricula with practical training and tech integration is essential. 5) Digital Transformation: Technology use is limited by infrastructure and skills. Solutions involve digital training for faculty, better internet access, and new tools for teaching and assessment. In conclusion, restructuring university governance is essential for improving education quality and meeting the demands of a knowledge-based society.

KEYWORDS: Education, Higher education, Current situation, Solutions, Innovation in education.

1. INTRODUCTION

The management of higher education is a subsector of the educational system which ensures that the quality of training and the institution's development is internally and externally sustainable. In terms of globalization and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, higher education is not only viewed from the lens of funding and infrastructural development, but also how well it aligns with the changing technological front, the evolution of the labor market, and the increasing standards for instructional delivery. There is great need by educational policymakers and managers to respond to the call for birth of an organized, appropriate, and holistic system of governance for higher education. It has been noted that the management of higher education is currently faced with a multitude of complex challenges [Dr.Katharina Spraul, 2007].

To begin with, innovation in training programs is currently stalled because management strategies are not suitable for the real needs of the practitioners. Subsequently, the financial mechanisms are not well enough developed to take advantage of the available resources, especially in public universities which are still largely funded by state budgets. Lastly, not only do the faculty members need to improve their area of expertise, but also their teaching skills to some more progressive level to be able to accommodate the student's flexible learning requirements [Ilmar Link, 1997].

Additionally, the emergence and growing popularity of new technologies, as well as profound changes in their nature, are creating new challenges in the management of higher education. The use of new technologies allows for better control of the educational process as well as for greater ease of access to educational materials for the students. Unfortunately, these institutions face serious obstacles such as the lack of funds, the lack of required materials, and the lack of the necessary understanding about modern technology [Nguyen Tien Hung, 2010].

The strategic management and the policy development process in higher education is one of the the most vital components to improve training quality and respond to the labor market needs. With regards to globalization and digital transformation, universities have to formulate flexible long-term strategies relevant to global changes. In Strategic Management of Higher Education, Several Nations have used strategic management models for effectiveness in higher education and vocational training [Limerick D, 1998]. They have been

successful in the USA for quite some time now where universities function under a strong autonomy model with a tail development program to meet the economy's knowledge based besoins. Develop economically, many countries in Europe are moving towards a decentralization from a centralized management to a university autonomous multicentric system of governance which combines self-governance and responsibility. In Vietnam, many reforms were introduced in accordance with integration policies. The government's decree on higher education reform during the years 2006-2020 set the target for Vietnamese higher education to reach a certain standard in the region that matched the market economy and was capable of assisting in the pursuing objectives of the social and economic development strategies. Although there are facilitatory policies, the higher education system of Vietnam still has important difficulties: 1. Multitude standard: The division of responsibilities from management of the Ministry of Education and Training to the universities is vague, giving rise to bureaucracy. 2. Autonomy of the university is partial: A number of universities have been granted autonomy but are still with limits of control over expenses, cash flow, student admission, and teaching programs, which results in decreased creativity.

Effective financial and resource management in the higher educational institutions is a prerequisite to improving the quality of teaching and research activities. With regard to globalization, institutions of higher education face complex financial problems in providing a balance between the costs of learning, investment in infrastructure, and scientific research. One of the more glaring problems in higher education financing is the overreliance on government money, especially with public institutions of higher learning. Despite the proposed improvements to financial independence provided by the "New Public Management" (NPM) model, budget reductions have made it impossible for institutions to maintain operations and enhance training quality. Some universities have sought external funding through partnerships with the industry, applied research, and technology transfer. Nonetheless, the potential to access new financial resources is limited due to policy constraints, administrative bottlenecks, and lengthy approval procedures. Another great challenge is the effective allocation of available resources. Universities need to guarantee reasonable financial distribution among instruction, research activities, and the development of academic infrastructure. The improvement of training quality requires investments into human

capital, faculty development, and teaching innovation.

Staff in these faculties are the key determinant of the quality of training and scientific research undertaken in the universities. Faculty management is broader than recruitment and includes training, assessment, and motivation management to harness their skills optimally. The share of faculty members with PhDs in Vietnamese universities is still lower than the desired level. The resolution 14/2005/NQ-CP stated that 35% of the teachers should have PhDs by the year 2020, which is not the case at the moment. Furthermore, the burden of teaching is a common concern, where a number of faculty members are teaching far over the limit, thereby decreasing the quantity and quality of their research and teaching.

The design of a curriculum and the method of instruction are crucial for enhancement of higher education quality. A well developed curriculum should not only teach concepts, but also train graduates on how to meet the work environment. However, higher education in Vietnam still faces several challenges that need to be aggressive changes in order to achieve integration and sustainability. Quite a number of Vietnamese universities still have programs that put too much emphasis on theory and too little on practice; such a situation does not keep up with the level of development in science and technology. The rapid growth in the number of students enrolling over the past couple of years has increased the strain on the educational system, resulting in a focus on infrastructure growth rather than improving the curriculum. Consequently, many graduates do not possess adequate practical skills and find it challenging to get employed. Some institutions are beginning to shift their approaches to advanced international integration by increasing practical lessons and decreasing theoretical lessons taught in class. Moreover, new technologies are being used in teaching, allowing students to access modern materials and more flexible learning approaches.

In this paper, we will discuss the most basic problems in the management of higher education and try to present the concepts which would make it more efficient. These concepts are not only formulated in terms of the most sophisticated systems of management which have been known for a long time, but also with some modifications which correspond to the real situation of the higher education in Vietnam. This is going to improve the system of management, therefore training quality will increase and at the same time it will prepare the country for the formulation of a knowledge-based economy.

2. METHODS

2.1. Survey Subjects and Scope

The survey was conducted at five public and private universities in the southern region of Vietnam. The survey participants included:

- 150 lecturers
- 50 department/faculty-level administrative staff
- 200 final-year students

2.2. Survey Tools and Procedure

- Quantitative questionnaire: focused on criteria related to academic management, financial management, human resources, quality assurance, and university governance.
- In-depth interviews: conducted with 15 administrative staff and 10 lecturers.
- Descriptive statistics and qualitative content analysis were used to process the data.

3. SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

3.1. The Current State of University Autonomy and Governance

University autonomy is an inevitable trend in the context of global integration and higher education reform. Autonomy not only refers to reducing administrative intervention from governing bodies but also involves a shift towards a modern governance model, in which educational institutions have the authority and responsibility to make decisions regarding academics, finance, organizational structure, and strategic development. However, survey results reveal a common reality: the autonomy mechanism at Vietnamese universities currently focuses mainly on financial aspects, while academic and personnel issues remain tightly controlled by higher authorities.

Specifically, 68% of surveyed lecturers believe that current autonomy is largely symbolic, focusing on financial aspects such as tuition collection, service revenue, and internal budget allocation. Meanwhile, decision-making powers related to curriculum, department organization, recruitment, and appointment of faculty-level personnel still require multiple levels of approval or must follow the Ministry of Education and Training's regulatory framework. This reduces flexibility in training activities, curriculum innovation, and the recruitment of staff suited to each institution's specialized needs.

In terms of academics, many higher education institutions struggle to design customized programs

aligned with practical needs and global trends. Although the amended Higher Education Law of 2018 affirms the right of universities to build their own programs, the existing regulatory frameworks remain restrictive, making it difficult to implement advanced, interdisciplinary, or internationalized curricula.

Regarding personnel, some universities reported delays in appointing department or faculty leaders or approving staffing plans, as these decisions require input from the university council or higher-level authorities. This affects the implementation of human resource development strategies and leads to organizational stagnation.

Another major issue is the difficulty in issuing internal regulations to operationalize autonomy. Public universities, in particular, are concerned about the legal validity of internal documents if they conflict with state regulations. Consequently, many institutions adopt a cautious approach to exercising autonomy or wait for guidance from higher authorities before making decisions.

Many administrators stated that while the amended Higher Education Law has provided a legal framework to promote autonomy, implementation remains inconsistent between state management agencies and educational institutions. Key areas such as university councils, accountability, and delegation of authority between the board of rectors and subordinate units still lack clear implementation guidelines or are interpreted in various ways.

In addition, a major challenge in university governance is that administrative capacity has not kept pace with the demands of autonomy. Some administrators lack experience or formal training in university governance under the new context, leading to confusion and underutilization of innovation opportunities.

The shift from a traditional administrative model to a modern university governance model requires changes in mindset, operational mechanisms, and organizational culture. However, most universities are still in a "transitional" phase, lacking significant institutional and managerial breakthroughs. This undermines the effectiveness of autonomy and affects both training quality and the competitiveness of Vietnamese universities in the global education market.

In summary, although the legal framework for university autonomy has been significantly improved, effective implementation requires policy coherence, enhanced governance capacity, minimized unnecessary administrative intervention, and a secure legal environment that encourages bold

innovation. Additionally, investing in management team development and issuing detailed guidance will be key to helping educational institutions exercise real and sustainable autonomy.

3.2. Issues in Human Resource Management

Human resource management in higher education is not merely an administrative issue but a strategic factor that directly affects training and research quality. Survey results show that up to 62% of administrators believe that faculty appointment, evaluation, and development remain largely formalistic, lacking clear, transparent, and motivational criteria.

In practice, the appointment process is often influenced by administrative or personal relationships rather than objective assessments based on professional capacity, actual contributions, or teaching and research outcomes. This not only reduces the motivation of staff but also fosters unfairness in the workplace and erodes internal trust.

Additionally, faculty evaluations are mainly based on administrative records, teaching hours, or periodic reports. However, critical elements such as teaching quality, student satisfaction, innovation in teaching methods, or research outcomes are often not systematically considered. This leads to evaluations that do not accurately reflect lecturers' actual capabilities and fail to positively influence professional development.

Moreover, long-term human resource development strategies at some institutions remain vague. Many universities lack workforce planning by specialty, individualized development pathways for lecturers, or policies to encourage research and further education. Training programs to enhance pedagogical, managerial, or research skills are often ad hoc, not ongoing, and misaligned with practical needs.

This is particularly concerning as higher education shifts toward autonomy, requiring faculty to not only be professionally competent but also adaptable to new demands in technology, teaching methods, and global integration.

Some lecturers interviewed also expressed a lack of motivation to stay long-term due to unclear promotion opportunities and the absence of mechanisms that recognize and reward individual efforts and contributions.

The consequences of these issues include instability in the teaching staff, reduced teaching quality, and an unattractive working environment. In the long run, this could result in a "brain drain" as capable individuals seek better opportunities at

institutions with more favorable policies or leave academia altogether.

In conclusion, human resource management at many higher education institutions still operates on an administrative level and has not truly become a strategic tool for comprehensive and sustainable staff development. Improving the systems for evaluation, appointment, and career development must be part of a university's overall strategic plan, tied to the goals of enhancing training quality and competitiveness in the context of integration.

3.3. Financial Management and Resource Allocation

Financial management is one of the key pillars determining the operational efficiency and sustainable development of higher education institutions. However, according to survey results, up to 76% of respondents indicated that the current internal budget allocation process lacks transparency, leading to consequences in trust, work motivation, and resource utilization.

1. Lack of Transparency in Budget Allocation

Feedback from lecturers and administrators reveals that budget planning, approval, and allocation processes are often internal, closed, and exclude the participation of budget-using units. The unclear disclosure of financial norms and the absence of specific evaluation criteria lead to unfair budget distribution among departments. Some units with larger training scales and heavier workloads receive less funding than smaller units due to the lack of clear quantitative principles.

2. Administrative Nature of Financial Management

Although many universities have adopted autonomous models, financial management mechanisms are still influenced by a subsidy mindset—allocations are made at the beginning of the year and are not flexibly adjusted during implementation. This makes it difficult for academic units to actively carry out plans for training, research, or international cooperation. Some opinions suggest that budget disbursement procedures are cumbersome and time-consuming, delaying research projects and teaching innovations.

3. Limited Support for Research Activities

Notably, research funding allocation does not effectively incentivize faculty. Many lecturers report not being prioritized financially when proposing research topics, or receiving insufficient funding to fully implement plans. Furthermore, proposal review, financial settlement, and approval procedures are complicated and lengthy,

discouraging participation. As a result, the quantity and quality of research outputs at some institutions remain low and inconsistent with staff potential.

4. Impact on Institutional Sustainability

When financial resources are inefficiently and opaquely allocated, departments find it hard to develop long-term plans. A lack of resources leads to patchwork solutions, affecting the quality of teaching, research, and community service. Additionally, unequal allocations reduce collaboration among units, resulting in departmentalism and weak internal cohesion.

5. Recommendations for Improvement

- To enhance financial management effectiveness in higher education, the research team proposes:
- Implementing performance-based budgeting linked to output indicators of each unit.
- Increasing stakeholder involvement (faculty, departments, offices, etc.) in budget planning and approval.
- Using digital tools to make financial management and allocation processes transparent (such as ERP systems, financial dashboards).
- Simplifying and digitizing research project approval and settlement procedures to encourage faculty participation.
- Establishing internal competitive funds to motivate innovation and creativity in using and mobilizing financial resources.

3.4. Impact on Training Quality

Survey results indicate that the quality of training at higher education institutions is being negatively affected by management limitations, especially in curriculum development and internal quality assurance.

1. Curricula are Outdated and Misaligned with Market Needs

- Students—the direct recipients of educational products—report that curricula do not keep pace with the rapidly changing labor market and technological advancements. Specific manifestations include:
- Courses are heavily theoretical, lacking practical application.
- Soft skills, professional skills, and critical thinking are insufficiently integrated.
- Curricula remain rigid and unchanged for years despite significant societal shifts.
- Enterprises are not adequately involved in curriculum design and evaluation.
- About 72% of students report having to learn

additional professional skills or attend external courses to meet job requirements. This highlights a significant gap between university education and labor market demands.

2. Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) is Ineffective

- IQA is a vital tool for universities to self-monitor, evaluate, and improve their programs. However, survey findings show IQA is not effectively implemented:
- Most internal assessments are conducted only during periodic accreditation cycles, not on an ongoing basis.
- There is a lack of dedicated staff and data infrastructure for continuous quality assessment.
- Evaluation indicators are mostly quantitative and do not fully capture student experiences or academic quality.
- Internal evaluation results are rarely used to meaningfully improve curricula or teaching methods.
- 58% of surveyed lecturers believe that quality accreditation is merely formalistic and serves coping purposes rather than real development.
- Furthermore, there is no effective monitoring mechanism to ensure implementation of post-accreditation recommendations, leading to recurring issues in subsequent cycles.

3. Consequences for Students and Universities

- The most visible impact is on student outcomes:
- Low rates of graduates working in their trained field; many switch careers soon after graduation.
- Student satisfaction with training quality is not high, affecting the institution's reputation and attractiveness.
- Some programs lose appeal, resulting in difficulties in student recruitment and retaining qualified faculty.

For institutions, poor training quality leads to low accreditation results, affecting their ability to participate in international projects, partnerships, and research funding.

4. Root Causes

- Lack of an overarching quality management strategy at the institutional level.
- Ineffective use of faculty evaluation systems, curriculum reviews, and student feedback.
- Weak connections between universities and the labor market.
- Limited capacity in data governance and quality management.

Overall, survey results reveal a common reality: higher education management in Vietnam remains overly administrative, lacks flexibility, and does not foster creativity or innovation. Decentralization has not been accompanied by strengthened governance capacity, resulting in a "half-hearted" autonomy. Educational institutions also face challenges in implementing effective human resource and financial management policies due to the constraints of numerous legal documents and lack of coordination across management levels.

3.5. Suggested answers for enhancing the effectiveness of higher education management

1. The global advanced management models and the gained experience

With globalization and increased technology, several modern higher education management models have been instituted and successfully implemented around the world.

These models not only improve the operational effectiveness of the universities, but also grant managerial discretion and ensure proper training is done. Some of the remarkable models are:

i. Balanced scorecard management model

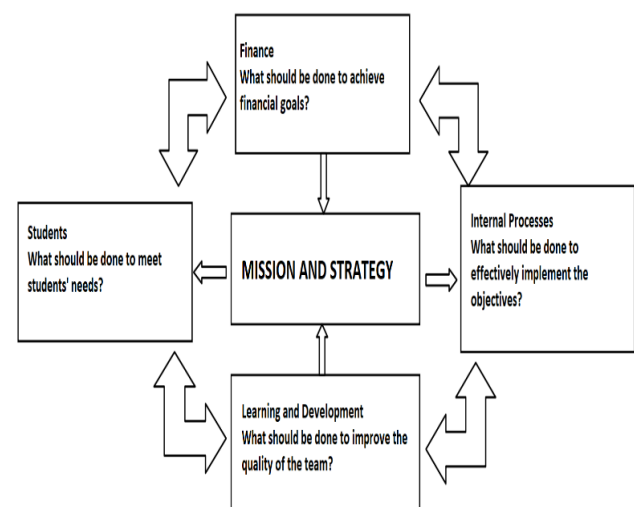


Figure 1: A strategic management system [Kaplan, R. S, 2001].

Balanced Scorecard (BSC) is a strategic management system created by Kaplan & Norton (Figure 1), it lets an organization track and improve its performance from four perspectives; financial, customer, internal processes, and learning & growth. In higher education, BSC assists in measuring and modifying the activity of the institution to its strategic goals. For example, BSC is utilized by Harvard University to improve the quality of teaching and resource management.

4. ENTREPRENEURIAL UNIVERSITY MODEL

This model supports the marketing of scientific research and collaboration with industries or businesses. Such universities as Stanford and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) have successfully merged research and business, resulting in the formation of high technology value added start-up companies.

Autonomous university model

The United Kingdom, the United States of America, and Singapore are some of the countries that have instituted the autonomous university model for greater flexibility with regards to their finances, human resources, and curriculum. For instance, National University of Singapore (NUS) has adopted this model and in turn, increased its global competitiveness.

Lessons Learned for Vietnam

From these models, several key lessons can be drawn: 1. In the current world, giving universities more independence helps them craft their development strategies. 2. Digital management increases both operational efficiency and teaching quality. 3. University-business partnerships enable students to engage in the labor market at an earlier stage. While transforming the higher education system in Vietnam, advanced management systems need to be applied carefully with respect to the improvement of education standards and the competitive ability of local universities. 4. Suggested Actions: Enhancing training standards management of higher education is a sensitive feature of the educational system and is that one that is responsible for assuring the quality, improving the training and the sustainable development as well. Management of higher education combines not only organizational and administrative work, but also includes finance, admissions, teaching and scientific research. Today, due to globalization and rapid technological development, most universities are challenged to continuously update and change existing curricula to reflect the needs of the labor market. One of the core problems in higher education management is the improvement of quality of instruction and research. As Van Tuấn (2018) points out, education quality is not only defined by the curriculum; it results from the teacher's qualifications, infrastructure, and pedagogical provision. It is necessary for the universities to even the content of teaching and give the teachers adequate empowering for the knowledge economy. Moreover, finance is another important domain of management in higher education.

Financial sustainability must be ensured by universities through efficient resource allocation towards research and curriculum development funding. It is a known fact that financial factors affect issues relating to the quality of training and the potential growth of universities, as described by Nguyen Thi Mai (2019).

Other challenges include controlling training quality and assessing academic performance. Trần Thị Hương (2020) argues that modern methods of assessment, such as online testing and continuous assessment, greatly enhance instructional effectiveness and respond to contemporary higher education demands.

3. Mechanisms of higher education quality control and assurance

The system of control and assurance of higher education quality comprises the elements and activities aimed at the management and enhancement of education standards in the educational institutions. As provided by the Higher Education law of Vietnam (2012), quality control in higher education includes monitoring the processes of teaching, learning, research, and service delivery to the students (Article 35). Universities are required to establish systems for internal evaluation of quality, have them verified by external independent assessment bodies, as well as take part in national and international surveys.

Nguyen Van Tuan (2017) remarked that quality control in higher education should focus on three areas: the content of education, the teaching staff, and the physical facility of the institution. The curriculum should be revisited on a regular basis and sufficient provision should be made for its relevance to the context while meeting the societal expectations.

Faculty members should have appropriate professional credentials, receive upgrading training, and be motivated to carry out research work and professional activities (Nguyen Van Tuan, 2017).

An effective mechanism for quality control should also contain particular requirements on how to measure developments in teaching, learning, and management as well as students and other interested parties in decision making. For many institutions, accreditation is one term which is viewed as a basic strategy for monitoring the quality of higher education as it aids in improving the training quality and image of an institution.

5. CONCLUSION

The supervision of higher education stands as one of the very significant fields in view of the existing socio-economic development because of the more dynamic

characteristics that education is undergoing. The higher education system in Vietnam has considerably developed but there are still a lot of issues and problems to be solved. Problems concerning policies, managerial organization, teaching effectiveness, and accreditation always need continuous scrutiny and enhancement. There is a great deal of policy and organizational, as well as pedagogical change which is crucial in raising the management of higher education system. Using

technology, granting more independence to institutions, and partnering with industry will enhance the quality of training to fulfill the needs of the job market. Through the improvement of faculty quality, and curriculum and teaching method modernization, Vietnam higher education system has the potential to grow in a sustainable manner and thus can contribute actively towards the economic and social development of the country.

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