Quality Assurance of the Aun-Qa Standards Training Program for the Training Majors in Vietnam Today

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ABSTRACT	Published Online: September 14, 2023

International integration is an inevitable trend that requires all participating countries to cooperate and compete with each other. That is also the process in which each nation must quickly create a breakthrough to assert its position in the international arena. Under the influence of that factor, Vietnam's education is also on the threshold of innovation and integration. Therefore, learning advanced educational models and ensuring world and regional standards is extremely necessary. In recent years, integrating into the common trend with other countries, Vietnam has introduced the concept of ensuring the quality of training programs at the higher education level since 1998. Among them, AUN-QA's training program evaluation standards are the most used by universities in Vietnam to date. Within the scope of the article, the author focuses on introducing the quality of training programs according to AUN-QA standards with its sets of criteria, pointing out the impacts of ensuring the quality of training programs according to AUN -QA. From there, we provide solutions to ensure the quality of training programs according to AUN-QA standards for training majors in Vietnam today.

KEYWORDS:
training program quality, AUN-QA, Vietnam, education and training.

INTRODUCTION

AUN-QA Network is established as the ASEAN quality assurance network in higher education with the responsibility to promote quality assurance in higher education institutions, raise the quality of higher education, and collaborate with both regional and international bodies for the benefit of the ASEAN community. We recognise the importance of quality in higher education and the need to develop a holistic quality assurance system to raise academic standards and enhance education, research and service among its member universities. In 1998, it mooted the AUN-QA Network, which led to the development of the AUN-QA Framework. Since then, the network has been promoting, developing, and implementing quality assurance practices based on an empirical approach where quality assurance practices are tested, evaluated, improved and shared.

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The AUN-QA activities are carried out by our valuable respective human resources, which provides a series of guidelines to promote the development of a quality assurance system as instruments for maintaining, improving and enhancing teaching, research and the overall academic standards of AUN member universities (Pham, 2005).

CONTENT

1. Concept of training program according to AUN-QA standards

The ASEAN University Network-Quality Assurance, referred to as AUN-QA herewith, has been a strong force in spearheading Quality Assurance in ASEAN higher education for over 20 years. The AUN-QA fosters and firmly enforces the true practices of continuous improvement through external exposure and internal self-reflection-values critical to the excellence of universities in the 21st century. The AUN and AUN-QA strive for excellence and no less. While adapting to the conditions of post-pandemic, we have emerged more tenacious and stronger than ever through our specific focus areas. R Reg The half-day program is an intensive and thorough, open dialogue platform aimed for optimum interaction among the assessors and experts.

Through the four-hour long assembly, participants are effectively triggered to enhance their views of professionalism quality in assessment and enhancement, they will be urged to unpack previous impressions and turning key results into cases based upon reality, faces, and experiences they have encountered, and finally, encouraged to present their cases with the best judgements through the AUN-QA's comprehensive, all-inclusive principles.

Concept

AUN (ASEAN University Network) is the quality assurance organization of the ASEAN University Network. The set of standards was issued in 2004 by the ASEAN University Network to promote the quality assurance process at universities in the region and aim for credit transfer from programs that meet standards among university in the network. AUN-QA's set of criteria includes 11 measures, including the following contents: Expected learning outcomes, Program description, Program structure and content, Teaching and learning methods, student assessment, quality lecturers, quality of support staff, quality of students and student support activities, infrastructure and equipment, improving output quality. AUN-QA focuses on evaluating all conditions to ensure the training quality of the entire program. According to AUN-QA, accreditation will help university evaluate what score their training program achieves on the regional assessment standard.

Introduction to the AUN-QA

AUN-QA is a set of standards with strict quality rules with specific and transparent criteria, focusing on a comprehensive evaluation of training programs on many aspects, such as output standards, program frameworks, and training staff. Faculty, facilities, quality assurance, connections between university, students, and businesses to ensure the quality of the entire training program. AUN-QA, by the leading universities of Southeast Asia, was established in November 1995 by the initiative of the Council of Education Ministers of Southeast Asia, with initial members led by the Education Ministers of the Southeast Asian Nations (Silva, 1997).

Since its establishment, AUN has considered training quality a vital goal to affirm the development of higher education in Southeast Asia and create linkages and mutual recognition of training quality between universities inside and outside the AUN network. To achieve this goal, AUN has launched an initiative to evaluate the quality of higher education at universities in Southeast Asia according to the AUN-QA expected quality assurance standards issued in 2004. AUN-QA is a set of standards with strict quality rules with specific and transparent criteria, focusing on assessing the conditions to ensure the training quality of the entire training program, not just based on the unique

characteristics of each speciality. The AUN set of standards comprehensively evaluates the training program from many aspects, such as output standards, program framework, teaching staff, facilities, quality assurance, connection between university and students, and businesses.

AUN recognized the importance of quality and the need to develop a comprehensive QA system among member universities. Since then, AUN-QA has grown and issued several versions of the quality assessment standards at both the training program and educational institution levels, based on an empirical approach based on best practices for quality assurance. Quality assurance is verified, evaluated, improved and shared. The development of the AUN-QA standards set at the training program level is described in the following figure:

The process of developing AUN-QA standards at the training program level

The AUN-QA V4.0 set of standards is compiled based on the AUN Council of Experts review results combined with feedback from stakeholders after each external assessment activity, including auditors, managers and lecturers involved. The AUN-QA set of criteria has gone through 3 versions. The latest version consists of 15 standards and 53 criteria. Standards include:

• Standard 1: Output standard, five criteria.
• Standard 2: Program Framework
• Standard 3: Program structure and content, seven criteria.
• Standard 4: Teaching and learning methods, six criteria.
• Standard 5: Assessment of learners, seven criteria.
• Standard 6: Teaching staff, eight criteria.
• Standard 7: Quality of support team
• Standard 8: Student quality
• Standard 9: Student support services, six criteria.
• Standard 10: Facilities, nine criteria.
• Standard 11: Outputs, five criteria.
• Standard 12: Quality assurance of the teaching and learning process
• Standard 13: Team development activities
• Standard 14: Get feedback from stakeholders
• Standard 15: Satisfaction of those involved
Each criterion is evaluated on seven levels:
• Level 1: Nothing (no supporting documents, plans, records)
• Level 2: Newly developed a plan
• Level 3: Documented, but not substantiated or yes but unclear
• Level 4: Having clear documents and supporting documents
• Level 5: There is a strong track record of effectiveness in the area under review

• Level 6: Good quality
• Level 7: Excellent.

Each criterion in the set of standards has equal weight; the evaluation score of the entire program is the average score of all 53 criteria. 4.0 is the threshold score that meets AUN's quality accreditation standards.

To develop human resources through higher education in the ASEAN region, in 1995, the Southeast Asia Network of Universities was established. Up to now, 27 universities from 10 countries in the region have become members of this organization. To promote quality assurance within universities in the area, AUN has launched an initiative to assess the quality of higher education according to the expected quality assurance standards of the ASEAN region. This is also how the ASEAN university network enhances mutual trust in training quality between university in the region and partner universities around the world, gradually contributing to promoting cooperation between universities in the region and the world, recognizing academic achievements and developing collaboration between universities in Southeast Asia and assessing the quality of training programs according to AUN standards to help university know what level the training program has reached on the regional evaluation scale. Next, to find out that the program still has problems that need to be overcome to ensure that the program is of the same quality as other programs in the same field in the ASEAN region.

2. Impact of ensuring the quality of training programs according to AUN-QA standards

Many benefits for students

Improving the quality of education and directing to a quality standard has been posed by the education sector as a central issue to be solved. National standards are a primary benchmark for university affirming training quality. However, the trend of international integration is taking place more and more deeply, forcing universities to find new measures of international stature. In 1995, the new Southeast Asian University Network was born. In 2000, the original members of AUN jointly developed standards to promote a quality assurance system to be used as a tool to maintain, improve and enhance the quality of teaching and research in AUN member universities; develop common quality standards for AUN member universities; Promote recognition of quality standards among AUN member universities.

Another reason why AUN was selected is that this set of standards does not focus on the specific characteristics of each major but focuses on assessing the conditions to ensure the training quality of the program. A focused set of standards and areas that any undergraduate program has as output standards: Curriculum, faculty and students, facilities, and quality

assurance... students are the primary beneficiaries of this assessment because they learn in a continuously improved environment. AUN accreditation results as an affirmation of the training program to the society about the quality of the program's outputs, so it is undoubtedly more accessible for students to access suitable jobs. Participating in the accreditation of training programs according to AUN-QA standards will also create conditions for students to transfer study credits between training programs of AUN member universities and develop advantages for student and faculty exchange activities between universities. And finally, employers have a reliable base to find quality human resources from a training program with internationalized quality references.

The selection of accreditation according to AUN-QA standards is to help university know which level the training program has reached on the regional evaluation scale. Next, to detect if the program still exists, what needs to be overcome to ensure the program is of the same quality as other programs in the same field in the ASEAN region? The essence of AUNQA's external quality assurance mechanism is to evaluate the quality of education at seven levels. Level 4 is considered educational quality, and universitys will be granted certificates.

With a strict and transparent inspection process and comprehensive assessment standards for training quality recognized by the education systems of countries inside and outside Southeast Asia, the AUN standard helps Vietnamese universities determine their position in the world step by step in the international arena. Participating in the AUN accreditation will bring the following benefits:

Quality assurance program

To meet AUN-QA standards, universities must ensure criteria for facilities, classrooms, and learning environment equipment for students. The curriculum is methodically built, combining maximum practice with theory, and is constantly updated according to modern educational trends of universities worldwide. Through AUN-QA accreditation activities, the strengths and shortcomings of the majors's training program will be clearly shown, and the university and faculty will have a specific action plan to overcome the deficiencies and improve. Improve training programs, improve, upgrade and ensure the quality of the teaching and learning environment.

Experience a good environment and student services

In the standards evaluated by AUN-QA, criteria for care, support, and consulting services for students are highly emphasized. Students learn and must "live" at university with experiences of services, fun activities,

diverse learning exchanges, and enthusiastic attention and support from other department units.

Easily conduct student exchanges

Students studying programs evaluated and recognized by AUN-QA will efficiently perform student exchange or credit conversion with regional universities. In addition, students graduating from these programs will have many advantages in finding jobs in regional and international markets.

Guaranteed output

By meeting AU-NQA standards, the University will affirm the university's commitment to society and employers regarding the quality of the output products of the training program, which is human resources trained according to standards. The rate is strictly controlled. AUN-QA testing results help employers have a reliable basis for finding quality human resources from a training program with international quality references.

The need to ensure the quality of training programs according to AUN-QA standards

With a strict and transparent inspection process and a set of standards for a comprehensive assessment of training quality recognized by the education systems of countries inside and outside the Southeast Asia region, AUN accreditation helps Vietnamese universities gradually determine their position. You are on the international stage. Participating in AUN accreditation will bring the following benefits:

• University: affirms the university's commitment to society and employers regarding the quality of the output of the training program, which is human resources trained according to controlled quality standards.

• Students: Students studying programs evaluated and recognized by AUN-QA will efficiently perform student exchange or credit conversion with regional universities. In addition, students graduating from these programs will have many advantages in finding jobs in regional and international markets.

• Enterprises: AUN-QA accreditation results help employers have a reliable basis for finding quality human resources from a training program with international quality references.

• Society: AUN-QA results are a guide in choosing a university for parents and students (Pham, 2018).

With these advantages, students can feel secure when studying programs that meet AUNQA standards at recognized universities. You can learn, experience and get guaranteed output with an internationally certified degree. Can confirm, verify/assess the quality and vital requirements of universities in the current international integration trend. AUN quality assessment standards are the goal that many universities in Vietnam and the Southeast Asia region are aiming for. The purpose of universities is not only to attract students but also to

affirm the quality of training and gradually build the quality culture of a university.

3. Some solutions to ensure the quality of training programs according to AUN-QA standards

According to the Law on Education of Vietnam, education quality accreditation is compulsory. Therefore, higher education accreditation in Vietnam began more than ten years ago, with many projects funded from abroad. However, the work started in 2015 and mainly focused on accrediting educational institutions. To assess the quality of university training programs, many universities initially, through regional and international funding projects, have participated in evaluating training programs according to provincial standards. Regional and international, such as AUN-QA, ABET, CTI, AACSP, etc. After that, many university actively seek and evaluate accreditation to ensure the quality of training programs. In our opinion, to ensure the quality of training programs according to AUN-QA standards, it is necessary to perform the following solutions synchronously:

Firstly, Developing the teaching staff

Training institutions must invest in developing the teaching staff because that is the decisive factor for the training program's success. Teaching staff must be guaranteed both in quantity and quality. The university needs to develop a human resource development plan in general and the teaching staff in particular. It must create an annual plan for each development stage of the University and each unit (taking the subject as the basis for the University's development); Clearly define these functions and tasks and delegate authority to departments and levels of management in the university; Develop a training and retraining roadmap for the team, including a plan to popularize foreign languages for teachers. This is done through international cooperation, taking advantage of training and scientific research projects. In addition, the University also needs to have a financial plan to promptly meet staff training and retraining needs according to a defined roadmap with appropriate training and retraining forms (domestic, foreign and combined).

Second, Build a team of professional support staff

Support staff is the bridge between lecturers and students. Each faculty must have a homeroom teacher for each program to support the operation of the program. There are no specialized officers for the program (Coordinator) in many university, but they still mainly operate under the direction of the Deans and homeroom teachers. Therefore, in the coming time, the university needs a team of support staff for lecturers and students. Specifically, it is necessary to establish a group of Coordinators of 3-5 people for each program. The coordinator is a specialized officer in charge of organizing and implementing program plans and must be

proficient in English. Coordinators are assigned responsibilities, have detailed job descriptions and are periodically evaluated on their attitude and work performance, including evaluation by the Dean of the Faculty and cross-evaluation by relevant departments' student reviews. In addition, the coordinator also needs to have information technology expertise and professional skills, enough to meet the needs of using equipment in the university and provide specific instructions to lecturers and students in the field—necessary cases.

Third, Developing student support services

In most training institutions, although they have paid attention and invested in developing student support services, most have not been as effective as expected. This comes from both objective and subjective reasons. Therefore, this standard should be given due attention. To meet the AUN-QA standard, it is necessary to build a system of support services for students, including Having a plan to monitor and evaluate student progress; students must receive feedback, appropriate counselling support about their learning and career process… To do this, the University can set up a student support centre. The Center is responsible for monitoring and evaluating students' learning and research process from entering the university until graduation. The centre Quarterly and annually reports and summarizes this learning process and evaluates students' progress through each subject. The assessment may not fully generalize the quality and improvement of students. Still, it is also the basis for the university to monitor and control the quality of students, and more importantly, the results help learners increase their efforts or make reasonable adjustments in the learning process to improve the situation. In addition, the student support centre is also responsible for receiving student feedback on all issues such as quality of lecturers, learning conditions, facilities, libraries,... and timely support solutions for students. In addition to supporting students in their studies, this Center can help students with other issues, such as career counselling, housing services, part-time jobs, extra-curricular services, and sightseeing tours. Travel, camping,...

The centre supports students with policies and difficult circumstances such as tuition fee exemption or reduction, prioritizing arranging accommodation in the dormitory, ... or applying for scholarships from domestic and foreign organizations to support students with excellent academic results… contribute to improving and enhancing the spiritual life of students.

Fourth, top modern equipment and facilities

To ensure AUN-QA quality standards, the university must invest in modern equipment and facilities, especially upgrading classrooms and libraries. The current situation shows that classrooms are newly funded and equipped with modern equipment but are still limited in area, machinery, equipment, and technical problems. Such broken microphones, non-functioning speaker systems, and projectors also significantly affect the university's teaching quality. Therefore, universitys need to build more classrooms fully equipped with modern equipment. The room must have an air conditioning system, sound system, presentation equipment, and office equipment such as computers and printers...

Besides, the university needs to pay attention to developing the library. The library must be modern, and standard library resources are considered very important and significantly impact students' teaching and learning quality. It is necessary to modernize the library in the direction of equipping it with digital library software, library security equipment system, magnetic gate system, and camera system,... in particular, the university has purchased Online databases such as BCRC, Taylor & Francis... and adding several foreign and Vietnamese books to serve lecturers and students throughout the university.

Fifth, Complete the evaluation system and ensure the quality of training programs

Universitys need to have a Quality Assurance Center with the functions and tasks of advising and implementing the work of ensuring the quality of higher education, building the university's quality policy, and presiding over coordination with Other units in the university to investigate, survey, and evaluate the university's programs, majors, and subjects.

CONCLUDE

The AUN-QA assessment has positively impacted the recent changes in training programs in all aspects, such as teaching and learning methods, testing, evaluation and training program design. This study shows that using AUN-QA Standards to evaluate training programs is a reasonable choice for university, despite the cost and other barriers, but brings higher efficiency. At the same time, the study shows the critical role of the AUN-QA quality assurance system in the positive changes in the training program. This study's most significant contribution is providing some solutions to ensure the quality of training programs according to AUN-QA standards. In our opinion, it is necessary to carry out the following solutions synchronously: (1) Developing teaching staff, (2) Building a team of professional support staff, (3) Developing student support services, (4) Modern equipment and facilities, (5) Complete the evaluation system and ensure the quality of the training program.

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