Quality Assessment of Curricular, Current Situation At Thai Nguyen University Of Technology

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ABSTRACT: *Educational quality assessment is both a goal and a purpose for educational institutions to improve and enhance training quality. In Vietnam as well as other countries in the world, the issue of educational quality receives attention from society, employers, learners and other stakeholders. Education quality is the key to the success or failure of educational institutions, therefore, quality assessment aims to assess the current state of education at the school, point out the limitations based on the opinions of stakeholders and the external assessment process to improve quality is an important requirement for educational institutions. Education quality assessment is carried out with two subjects: educational institutions and curricular. This article contributes to assessing the role of curriculum quality assessment and presents the current status of this work at the Thainguyen University of Technology.*
KEYWORDS: *Quality assessment; external assessment, self-assessment, curriculum, University of Technology.*

I. INTRODUCTION

"Quality accreditation is a process in which an educational institution or curriculum undergoes an assessment process to determine compliance with established standards/criteria, which are reviewed and critically evaluated by experts/peer groups to ensure the quality of the educational institution or curriculum"[1]. Quality accreditation is a model and method of quality assessment used by many educational systems/institutions with a history of formation dating back more than a century in the United States. In Vietnam today, quality accreditation is becoming popular in educational institutions and is not only a mandatory requirement but also the foundation for building a quality culture in schools. Therefore, there is an increasingly correct awareness of the role and position of accreditation work in schools as well as the allocation of appropriate resources for this work.

II. CONTENT

1. Some concepts related to curriculum accreditation

- *The curriculum* of a major (Program) at a specific level includes: Objectives, standards of knowledge, skills, attitudes that learners need to achieve after graduation: training content, methods and activities; Conditions of facilities - techniques, organizational structure, functions, tasks and academic activities of the unit assigned to implement training in that major.

 - *The curriculum* of a training program at a specific level includes: General objectives, Specific objectives and output standards for the major and each module; training content, assessment methods and duration for the major and each module.

- *The quality of a curriculum* is the satisfaction of the General Objectives, Specific Objectives and output standards of the curriculum at a specific level, meeting the requirements prescribed by the Law on Higher Education and the National Qualifications Framework, in accordance with the human resource needs of the locality, the industry and society.

- *The criteria for assessing the quality* of curricular at all levels of higher education are the level of requirements on the content and conditions that the curriculum must meet to be recognized as meeting educational quality standards.

- *The criteria for assessing the quality of curricular* at all levels of higher education are the level of requirements and conditions that must be achieved in a specific aspect of each standard.

 - *Benchmarking* is the activity of comparing and contrasting a higher education institution or a curriculum with a set of educational quality assessment standards or with other selected higher education institutions/curricular.

- *Assessing the quality* of curricular at all levels of higher education is the process of collecting, processing information, and making judgments based on assessment criteria for all activities related to curricular in higher

education institutions, including: Objectives and output standards of the curriculum; description of the curriculum; structure and content of the curriculum; approaches in teaching and learning; assessment of learning outcomes of learners; faculty and researchers; staff; learners and learner support activities; facilities and equipment; improving quality and output results.

- *Measuring the level of meeting* the CDR is the process of determining the capacity of learners according to the requirements of the CDR.

- *Assessing the level of achieving the CDR of the curriculum* is the process of collecting, processing and analyzing data to assess the level of learners meeting or not meeting the CDR of the curriculum.

- *Core courses (A-Assessed)* are courses selected to determine the level of learners achieving the curriculum's CDR. Core courses are specifically identified in the teaching sequence allocation table according to the curriculum's CDR.

- *The validity of the assessment of the CDR* is the extent to which an assessment tool or method measures what it is intended to measure. In other words, a test or assessment method has high validity if it truly reflects the competencies, skills and knowledge that learners are expected to achieve according to the CDR of the curriculum.

- *Reliability* in the assessment of the CDR is the level of stability and consistency of the assessment results when repeated under similar conditions. An assessment method has high reliability when its results are not significantly affected by random factors, errors or differences between assessors.

- *Stakeholders* related to educational institutions include learners, lecturers, staff, leadership and management teams, employers, partners, learners' families, investors, and agencies, direct management agencies, state management agencies in charge of education, other relevant organizations and individuals.

- *Educational philosophy* is a set of core views that guide educational goals, content and teaching methods, and the roles of teachers and learners in educational activities.

2. Content and role of curriculum accreditation

2.1. Content

- The curriculum quality assessment process includes the following 4 steps:

a) Self-assessment;

b) External assessment;

c) Evaluation of assessment results;

d) Recognition of meeting educational quality standards

- The curriculum quality accreditation cycle is 05 years for curricular that are assessed as meeting, except for the following cases:

+ For curricular that are assessed as meeting the conditional level, a maximum of 2 years (24 months) must continue to implement quality improvement to be assessed as meeting the meeting level.

+ For curricular that were assessed as satisfactory in the previous cycle, if they continue to be assessed at the satisfactory level with a higher rate of standards and criteria than the previous cycle and at the same time the quality improvement results meet the requirements, basically overcoming the weaknesses pointed out in the previous cycle, the next training quality assessment cycle is 07 years.

- Self-assessment process: curriculum self-assessment activities are a mandatory requirement carried out according to the current self-assessment process of the Univesities. The self-assessment process includes the following steps:

a) Establishing a self-assessment council;

b) Making a self-assessment plan;

c) Collecting, analyzing and processing information and evidence;

d) Self-assessing the level of achievement according to each criterion;

e) Writing a self-assessment report;

e) Storing and using the self-assessment report;

f) Deploying activities after completing the self-assessment report.

2.2. Role

Firstly, the quality assessment of curricular helps the Univesities have an overall view of the current status of management and operation of the Univesities 's current curricular. The review is carried out systematically, comprehensively and objectively on the basis of a set of assessment criteria issued by competent agencies/organizations and comments on the quality status of relevant parties including: students, alumni; employers, appraisal team experts, School officials, etc.

Secondly, based on the assessment results, the Univesities has a plan to improve the quality of curricular in the direction of: promoting strengths, overcoming limitations of curricular, thereby improving the training quality of the Univesities.

Thirdly, through quality assessment, the Univesities has the opportunity to access other standards on curricular, to compare and benchmark with other educational institutions with the same curriculum, thereby having more information and data to operate and develop curricular more effectively.

Fourthly, quality assessment not only contributes to creating a quality culture in the Univesities but also affirms the Univesities 's position in society, contributing to the development of the Univesities in line with the development trend of domestic and international education.

3. Current status of implementing curriculum assessment at the University of Technology

Today, the University of Technology under Thai Nguyen University is a multidisciplinary training institution at undergraduate and graduate levels. The predecessor of the University was "Branch of the University of Technology in Thai Nguyen Iron and Steel Area", established under Decision No. 164/CP, dated August 19, 1965 of the Government Council with the mission of *being a training facility for high-quality human resources; scientific research; consulting, application and technology transfer to meet the requirements of sustainable development of the country and international integration and the vision is to build the University of Technology to always be in the leading position in the system of public universities in the field of engineering and technology with the application orientation of Vietnam.*

Currently, the total training scale of the University of Technology is about 10,000 students and makes the University become one of the important training facilities, strong in both quality and quantity, contributing a large workforce of science and technology sectors to the development of the country. In addition to traditional training majors such as mechanics, electricity, electronics, in recent years, the University of Technology has been expanding its training majors and professions to adapt to the development trends of the world and domestic economy. In 2024, the University began enrolling and training new majors such as: Robots and Artificial Intelligence in Robotics Engineering; Electronic, Semiconductor and Microcircuit Technology in Electronics and Telecommunications Engineering; Foreign trade belongs to the Industrial Management sector and in 2024, the University has been approved by the University of Technology to open the Electrical and Electronic Engineering major, and is expected to complete the project to open the major in early 2025.

With the curricular in operation, the University has conducted self-assessment of all existing programs, external assessment of 100% of the programs eligible for assessment, namely: 04 curricular assessed according to the AUN-QA standards (Advanced Electrical Engineering Program; Advanced Mechanical Engineering Program; Mechatronics Engineering; Control and Automation Engineering); 11 curricular are assessed according to the standards of the Ministry of Education and Training (Electrical Engineering; Telecommunications Engineering; Automotive Engineering Technology; Mechanical Engineering; Computer Engineering; Construction Engineering; Industrial Economics; Industrial Management; Electrical and Electronic Technology; Machine Manufacturing Technology; Mechanical Power Engineering). The curricular of Univesities are implemented correctly and strictly according to the steps in the prescribed assessment process and achieve high results in external assessment.

Basically, the quality assessment of the curriculum of the University of Technology is carried out according to regulations. Currently, the School approaches and conducts assessment based on 2 sets of standards:

Firstly, the set of standards for assessing the quality of the curriculum is stipulated in Circular 04/2016/TT-BGDDT dated March 14, 2016, including 11 standards divided into 50 criteria, specifically: Standard 1. Objectives and output standards of the curriculum (3); Standard 2. Description of the curriculum (3); Standard 3. Curriculum structure and content (3); Standard 4. Approaches to teaching and learning (3); Standard 5. Assessment of learner learning outcomes (5); Standard 6. Faculty and researchers (7); Standard 7. Staff (5); Standard 8. Learners and learner support activities (5); Standard 9. Facilities and equipment (5); Standard 10. Improving quality (6); Standard 11. Output results (5).

With the assessment of each criterion in each standard uses a 7-level scale, in which:

- Level 1: Completely does not meet the requirements of the criterion, must have immediate solutions to overcome;
- Level 2: Does not meet the requirements of the criterion, needs solutions to overcome;
- Level 3: Does not fully meet the requirements of the criterion but only needs some small improvements to meet the requirements;
- Level 4: Meets the requirements of the criterion;
- Level 5: Meets the requirements of the criterion better;
- Level 6: Meets the requirements of the criterion very well;
- Level 7: Excellently meets the criteria requirements.

Criteria assessed from level 1 to level 3 are not met, from level 4 to level 7 are met.

Secondly, the set of standards for assessing the quality of curricular according to AUN.QA (ASEAN University Network - Quality Assurance) is a set of standards with strict quality rules, specific and clear criteria, focusing on comprehensively assessing the curriculum in many aspects such as output standards, program framework,

teaching staff, facilities, quality assurance work, connection between schools, students, and businesses to ensure the quality of the entire curriculum.)

AUN stands for ASEAN University Network. This is a network of leading universities in Southeast Asia (SEA) established in 1995 with initial members nominated by the Ministers of Education of the countries. **AUN-QA** is a set of standards with many strict rules on strict quality. Each rule has clear, specific criteria and focuses on assessing the conditions to ensure the quality of the entire curriculum.

AUN considers training quality an important goal affirming the development of higher education in Southeast Asia. In 2004, the initiative to assess the quality of education at universities in the Southeast Asia region was built by AUN through the common quality standards AUN-QA (ASEAN University Network - Quality Assurance). This is a set of standards that creates connectivity and recognition of training quality between universities inside and outside AUN.

Version 4.0 of the AUN-QA Standards used to assess the curriculum level is used by the University in the accreditation of 04 curricular including the following 8 standards:

Expected Learning Outcomes;
2. Program Structure and Content;
3. Teaching and Learning Approach;
4. Student Assessment;
5. Academic Staff;
6. Student Support Services;
7. Facilities and Infrastructure;
8. Output and Outcomes.

The assessment of the criteria in this set of standards is assessed by 7 levels:
- 1 = nothing (no documents, plans, evidence).
- 2 = this topic is only in the plan.
- 3 = there are documents, but no specific evidence.
- 4 = there are documents and evidence.
- 5 = there is clear evidence of effectiveness in the area of consideration.
- 6 = good quality.
- 7 = excellent quality.

In the set of standards, each criterion is equally important. The score used to evaluate the entire program will be the average score of all 74 criteria. And the threshold score to meet the AUN quality standard is 4.0.

Basically, a quality improvement request is a way of getting feedback to measure improvement, or a cycle of planning, implementing, checking output against pre-determined requirements, and then implementing or adjusting the requirements for the next improvement. Therefore, the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Action) concept is built into all eight standards and it is also the basis for self-assessment and external assessment of the curricular of the Universities.

III. CONCLUSION

In 2025, the Ministry of Education and Training issued Circular No. 04/2025/TT-BGDDT regulating the quality assessment of curricular at all levels of higher education (Circular 04) consisting of 5 chapters and 46 articles, built on the basis of updating the curriculum assessment standards version 4.0 of the Quality Assurance Organization under the ASEAN University Network for Quality Assurance (AUN-QA) and in accordance with the practical conditions of higher education in Vietnam. The new circular aims at international and regional integration in quality assurance and accreditation, especially in the context that the Ministry of Education and Training is developing a report on the reference of Vietnam's National Qualifications Framework with the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework and amending and supplementing the Vietnam National Qualifications Framework, implementing Decision No. 78/QD-TTg of the Prime Minister on quality assurance and accreditation of higher education. These are also very new points in educational quality accreditation that the University of Technology is approaching to prepare for the next assessment cycles to standardize and improve the training quality of the University.

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