



Accreditation of educational institution quality- Advantages and disadvantages in public implementation at Thai Nguyen university technology

Duong Thi Thao

Department of Foreign Languages, International Faculty, Thai Nguyen University of Technology, Vietnam

Abstract

The accreditation of educational institution quality is a mandatory requirement for the existence of educational institutions in the national education system in accordance with the law. This activity is a necessary condition to ensure that educational institutions continue to operate. On the other hand, this is also an opportunity for educational institutions to develop quality improvement plans after accreditation. The University of Industrial Technology soon grasped the development trend and the inevitable requirements for improving quality through accreditation activities, so up to now the University has obtained many significant results in this work. However, because this is a new requirement, there are still many difficulties and limitations in the implementation process. Therefore, new solutions to improve the quality of this work for the University are really necessary in the current context of university autonomy.

This article summarizes the basic theories of educational quality accreditation in Vietnam and highlights the advantages and difficulties in carrying out this work at the Thai Nguyen University of Technology with the goal of proving the timely steps of the University to meet the development trend of domestic and international education and propose recommendations to promote and improve the quality of this work at the University.

Keywords: Accreditation, evaluation, educational institutions, Thai Nguyen University of Technology

Introduction

Educational institution quality accreditation is one of the key tasks in the period of international integration as required by the Ministry of Education and Training. The objectives of educational quality accreditation according to Article 49 - Law on Higher Education 2012 are: ensuring and improving the quality of higher education; confirming the extent to which the higher education institution or training program meets the goals of higher education in each given period; serving as a basis for higher education institutions to explain to competent state management agencies and society about the current state of training quality; serving as a basis for learners to choose higher education institutions, training programs and employers to select human resources. The results of higher education quality accreditation are used as one of the criteria to stratify and rank higher education institutions; serve as a basis for determining the quality of higher education, status and reputation of higher education institutions; exercise autonomy and self-responsibility; support investment support and task assignment; and serve as the basis for the State and society to monitor the activities of higher education institutions. The Certificate of Education Quality Accreditation recognizes that the unit meets educational quality standards and is valid for 5 years. According to the Decree No. 73/2015/ND-CP dated September 8, 2015 of the Government regulating stratification standards, ranking framework and ranking standards for higher education institutions, the quality results of educational institutions are considered one of the conditions for implementing stratification and ranking of higher education institutions.

Up to now, the awareness of quality accreditation of educational institutions at Universities is not really complete and commensurate with its role. Therefore, the

implementation of this work at some educational establishments is not really complete or taken seriously. The Thai Nguyen University of Technology has so far gone through two evaluation cycles. The results have shown that the University has paid great attention to accreditation work, but there are still many limitations in the deployment. The process of implementing the university accreditation revealed favorable conditions, but also many difficulties and challenges. Therefore, a correct and sufficient awareness of this work and its advantages and disadvantages is a truly necessary requirement, creating a premise for implementing this activity at the University in the next evaluation cycles.

Content

1. General theories about educational institution quality accreditation activities

1.1 Some related concepts

- *The quality of a higher education institution* is the response to the goals set by the educational institution, ensuring the requirements for educational goals of the Law on Higher Education, in accordance with the requirements for training human resources for socio-economic development of the locality and the whole country.
- *Assessing the quality of a higher education institution* is the collection, processing of information, and making judgments based on assessment standards for all activities of the educational institution, including: ensuring the quality of strategy, ensuring the quality of the system, ensuring the quality of implementing functions and operating results of educational institutions.
- *Quality accreditation of higher education institutions* is the activity of evaluating and recognizing the degree to

which educational institutions meet educational quality standards issued by the Minister of Education and Training.

- *Self-assessment* is the process in which educational institutions self-review and research based on educational quality assessment standards issued by the Minister of Education and Training to report on the current state of educational quality, effectiveness of training activities, scientific research, human resources, facilities and other related issues so that educational institutions can adjust resources and implementation processes to meet the educational quality standards.
- *External assessment* is the survey and assessment process of an educational quality accreditation organization based on educational quality assessment standards issued by the Minister of Education and Training to determine the level of meeting educational quality standards of educational institutions.
- *Set of standards for assessing the quality of educational institutions* is the level of requirements and conditions that an educational institution must meet to be recognized as meeting educational quality standards. Each standard corresponds to an area of activity of the educational institution; in each standard, there are a number of criteria.
- *Criteria for evaluating the quality of educational institutions* are the level of requirements and conditions that need to be achieved in a specific aspect of each standard.
- *Expected Learning Outcome* is the minimum requirement for knowledge, skills, level of autonomy and personal responsibility that learners achieve after completing the training program, as committed by the educational institution with learners, the society and publicly announce with conditions to ensure the implementation.
- *Program* at a specific level of a field of study includes: goals and output standards; training content, methods and activities; physical and technical conditions, organizational structure, functions, tasks and academic activities of the unit assigned to implement training in that field of study.
- *Curriculum* of a training program at a specific level includes: general goals, specific goals and output standards for the major and each module; training content, assessment methods and duration for each major and module.
- *Benchmarking* is the activity of comparing and contrasting an educational institution or training program with a set of standards for assessing educational quality or with the selected educational institution/training program.
- *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.

1.2. History of formation and development of educational institution quality accreditation

The term "accreditation" originated in the United States and accreditation systems based on the US model were subsequently established in many countries worldwide. The main purpose of these systems is to ensure the quality of higher education, accountability, transparency and facilitate student mobility.

Education quality accreditation has been formed and developed for a long period. At present, this activity is increasingly popular because it is an effective tool to help universities control and ensure training quality, improving the competitiveness of educational institutions. According to the Council for Higher Education Accreditation-CHEA, *Accreditation is an external quality review process used by higher education to survey and evaluate educational institutions and training sectors to ensure and improve quality.* In Vietnam, *"Education quality accreditation is the main measure to determine the level of implementation of educational goals, programs, and content for universities and other educational institutions. Education quality accreditation is performed periodically throughout the country and for each educational institution. The results of education quality accreditation are publicly announced for the society to know and monitor"* [6].

From 2007 to present, the Ministry of Education and Training has issued a set of educational quality accreditation standards for educational institutions and training programs, accreditation cycles and processes; system of documents regulating the assessment and accreditation of educational institutions and training programs along with specific instructions on standards used as implementation tools. The system of documents regulating the assessment and accreditation of educational institutions and training programs is increasingly complete, marking the completion of the process of transferring assessment methods of the Ministry of Education and Training for educational institutions across the country, preparing for comprehensive quality accreditation.

The quality accreditation activities at the educational institution level in our country have had strong developments. As of May 2018, according to statistical results of 05 inspection centers under the following units: Hanoi National University, Ho Chi Minh National University, Da Nang University, Vietnam Association of Colleges and Universities and Vinh University, the whole country has 95 universities and 02 Colleges recognized issued certificates of accreditation in accordance with the standards of the Ministry of Education and Training, 05 educational institutions were recognized to meet the standards of international accreditation organizations such as AUN-QA (ASEAN University Quality Assurance Network), HCERES (French High Council for Evaluation of Research and Higher Education); 114 training programs, including: 08 assessment programs in accordance with domestic standards and 106 assessment programs in accordance with regional and international standards. The Ministry of Education and Training issued an accreditation plan with the goal that by 2020 all universities in the country must be accredited, and at least 10% of training programs of educational institutions must be accredited.

At present, the Ministry of Education and Training has begun to apply a set of quality accreditation standards for training programs according to AUN-QA with 11 standards

and 50 criteria (Circular No. 04/2016), and is implementing Pilot application of a set of standards for evaluating educational facilities according to AUN-QA with 25 standards and 111 criteria (Circular No. 12/2017). The criteria of the standards are evaluated on a 7-level evaluation scale, from unsatisfactory to excellent performance, reaching the level of the world's leading educational institutions.

1.3 Role of quality accreditation for educational institutions

Basically, the educational quality accreditation has 4 major roles.

Firstly, educational quality accreditation gives universities the opportunity to systematically review all of their activities and thereby adjust their activities according to a certain standard. There are many different views on quality, such as: The quality is assessed by the factors “input”, “output” or by “added value”, etc. However, to accurately assess the quality of a university, it is impossible to consider only one aspect of the university, the quality of input or output, but requires an overall view of the entire university's activities. That is the role of quality accreditation itself will not immediately create quality for each university, but it is a mirror that reflects the entire current situation of the university, helping managers see the strengths and weaknesses of your unit so that you can take appropriate next action steps.

Secondly, the quality accreditation helps universities orient and determine quality standards for each activity. The quality standards were first determined by the Ministry of Education and Training in 2007 (Decision No. 65/2007/QĐ-BGDĐT dated November 1, 2007 of the Minister of Education and Training) which is a set of standards, including 10 standards with 61 criteria and specific indicators that universities need to meet to ensure the comprehensive quality. Analyzing and describing the current situation, finding strengths and weaknesses, and making action plans and solutions to address these shortcomings are the development directions for the next stage of universities.

Thirdly, the educational quality accreditation is a firm statement to stakeholders about the current quality status of the university. Firstly, voluntarily registering for accreditation is considered a commitment to the quality of training that the university brings to learners and other stakeholders, such as: employers, partners, and the society. In addition, external assessment activities are performed through third parties who are experts with experience in training, research and higher education management, with accreditation training certificates and/or accreditation cards of education quality accreditors will be highly objective in recognizing the quality of the university. Therefore, accreditation results provide relevant parties with timely and accurate information to confirm the university's training quality, thereby providing a basis for choosing appropriate services.

Fourthly, educational quality accreditation creates a premise for building a quality culture for educational institutions. Quality accreditation activities are based on indicators and standards for evaluation; therefore, this information will help each member of the university better understand how their work and those of those involved achieve quality, so that they know how to proactively

continuously improve the quality of their work, contributing to the relevant people act in accordance with the quality, then a quality culture will gradually form at the higher education institution.

2. Characteristics of the situation of the University of Industrial Technology

Today, the Thai Nguyen University of Technology under Thai Nguyen University is a multidisciplinary training institution at undergraduate and graduate levels. Official address of the University: No. 666, Street 3-2, Tich Luong Ward, Thai Nguyen City. The university's predecessor was "Polytechnic University Branch in Thai Nguyen Iron and Steel Area", established by the Decision No. 164/CP, August 19, 1965 of the Government Council. By 2022, after 57 years of construction and development in many stages, the university has different names:

- Polytechnic University branch in Thai Nguyen Iron and Steel Area (1965-1966);
- Mechanical and Electrical University Branch (1966-1976);
- Viet Bac University of Industrial Technology (1976-1982);
- Thai Nguyen University of Industry (1982-1994);
- Thai Nguyen University of Technology, Thai Nguyen University (1994 - present).

In each stage of development and construction, the University determines its mission, vision and development values to serve as a guideline in that stage of development. In 2021, the University Council has developed a University development strategy that clearly states the mission, vision, and core values, specifically:

- **Mission:** The Thai Nguyen University of Technology - Thai Nguyen University is a high-quality human resource training institution; scientific research; consulting, applying and transferring technology to meet the requirements of sustainable development of the country and international integration.
- **Vision:** Becoming a university meeting national and regional standards with an application orientation in the field of science, engineering and technology; is a prestigious domestic and regional center for research, application and technology transfer; is a facility providing high quality human resources to serve the community, making an important contribution to the country's economic, cultural and social development.

Core values: Humanities - Cooperation - Creativity

The university focuses on building a modern, cooperative and humane educational environment; create a friendly, useful and practical living and learning environment, in order to promote learners' passion for learning, research and creativity; training necessary skills to help learners become independent in perception, collaborate in activities to improve their adaptability and create new values for the collective, community and society; educating on codes of conduct, social and professional ethical standards in order to promote learners to regularly cultivate and practice ethics, culture of behavior, and to be aware of their responsibilities towards themselves, their families and the society. That is the foundation for future success.

Regarding organizational structure, the University has 23 units, including: 08 departments, 05 functional centers, 10 specialized units (09 faculties, 01 training center), there is

01 science and technology organization, the High-Tech Research Institute of Industrial Engineering, 01 Open Training Institute.

In terms of human resources, up to now, the University has a total of 483 officials and employees, the average age is 39 years old, the number of doctors under 45 years old is 67/92; 22 young doctors were trained and trained abroad, the number of associate professors under 45 years old was 7/16 people; number of lecturers with IC3 certificates: 255/362 lecturers, international foreign language certificates: 289/362 lecturers.

The current training scale of the University is about more than 7,000 students in undergraduate and postgraduate training systems in 21 undergraduate training programs: Mechanical Engineering, Materials Engineering; Mechatronics engineering; Dynamic mechanical engineering; Electronics and Telecommunications Engineering, Computer Engineering; Construction Engineering, Environmental Engineering, Machine Manufacturing Technology, Electrical and Electronics Engineering Technology, Industrial Management, English Language, Industrial Economics; Mechanical Engineering advanced program, Electrical Engineering advanced program, Control and automation engineering, Electrical Engineering; Automotive engineering technology; Control and automation engineering technology; 07 Master's training programs, and 04 Doctoral training programs.

With nearly 60 years of construction and development, the university's faculty and students have made efforts to achieve many results in teaching, learning, and scientific research activities to meet the needs of training scientific and technical staff to serve the cause of building the country in the reform period. Through the journey of construction and growth, the University of Industrial Technology has developed continuously and become one of the public universities offering multi-disciplinary training, from bachelor's to doctoral levels, with quality and prestige throughout the country.

With the goal of training highly qualified human resources, and the university development strategy following the application trend, the University of Industrial Technology has been actively contributing to the sustainable development of the country.

3. Advantages and disadvantages in implementing quality accreditation of educational institutions at the University of Industrial Technology.

3.1. Advantages

The University's leadership team has made correct judgments about quality accreditation very early on, so the recent 2017 - 2022 assessment cycle is the second assessment cycle to be completed and the University of Industrial Technology became one of the very few in the total number of training institutions that implemented the second evaluation cycle. The results of the evaluation over the cycles with the appropriate recommendations of the external evaluation expert team have pointed out the strengths and remaining points in the university's operations, on that basis, the university has developed a review and improvement plan to improve the quality of all aspects of operations. This is a very meaningful task after accreditation for Universities in general and the University of Industrial Technology in particular.

In addition, the system of regulatory documents of the Ministry of Education and Training is quite complete and detailed on accreditation activities, making it convenient for the University to implement with complete instructions.

Thai Nguyen University also has enough concern about accreditation, so it has made this content one of the key tasks requiring member universities to implement along with policies to create favorable conditions to support for universities, especially in evaluating training programs in accordance with the AUN-QA standards.

Moreover, for the Thai Nguyen University of Technology, basically the staff, workers, and learners also have certain awareness about this work, so the implementation work also has certain advantages.

The alumni network is one of the strengths of the University with the Mechanical and Electrical Student Association setting a Vietnamese record for the Association with the largest number of members. This makes connecting, collecting survey opinions and organizing interviews with alumni - a mandatory requirement in implementing the evaluation process outside of educational institutions at the University quite convenient and achieving good results.

Implementing the main accreditation work, the University has actively implemented the Resolution of the 14th University Party Congress, and at the same time implemented the university development strategy for the period 2020 - 2025 with a vision to 2030, which identifies: build a University of Industrial Technology following the orientation of an applied university, meeting national standards and completing cycle 2 accreditation, 100% of training programs are quality accredited in accordance with the prescribed standards.

3.2. Disadvantages

Firstly, sometimes there is a lack of determination and commitment from the university's leaders. The internal quality assurance activities in general and educational quality accreditation in particular are a long-term process, requiring the participation and consensus of all officials, employees and students. The reality has showed that if the leadership has the right awareness, really cares, invests effort, and provides close direction, the university's accreditation work can be carried out properly and effectively. The determination and commitment to implementation will also create motivation for the collective to work towards the goal of improving the quality of training and service of the university. However, currently not all managers are fully aware and see the importance of accreditation, so it will be very difficult to implement this work. Therefore, at some times, the implementation work is not really drastic.

Secondly, the awareness of officials, employees, and students about educational quality accreditation is not high. Up to now, the quality accreditation is no longer a new issue in Vietnam; however, its implementation to all relevant subjects in the university is still ineffective. Many lecturers, students, and employers do not fully understand the role, effects, and content of the quality accreditation. This lack of understanding is mainly due to propaganda and promotion work, and university self-assessment and accreditation activities are mainly carried out by a few specialized units, and have not really become regular activities at the university so that relevant subjects can easily access and grasp information.

Thirdly, the lack of experience in implementing and writing self-assessment reports to conduct quality inspection. Most members of the Self-Evaluation Council are administrators in charge of many tasks at the university, so they rarely invest adequate time in self-evaluation activities. In addition, the teams responsible for writing self-assessment reports lack experience and have not been trained in information collection, processing, and evidence techniques. There is a lack of coordination between specialized groups during the self-assessment process, and joint discussions between specialized groups and between specialized groups and the Self-assessment Council are rarely conducted. These things make quality accreditation difficult when experts evaluate largely through the university's self-assessment report.

Fourthly, there are difficulties in collecting, using, and managing evidence for self-assessment. It can be said that collecting and analyzing evidence is difficult for all universities. The reason is that the storage work is not good, for example, it has not become a habit to save documents to record the content of meetings or disseminate work, especially many data have not been statistically compiled in tables for easy evaluation by the evaluation team to monitor and evaluate the university's changes and trends and developments in the future.

Fifthly, the funding for quality inspection activities is limited, which is related to the payment of remuneration to participants as well as compensation. Therefore, mobilizing staff to participate in this work outside of professional work faces many difficulties.

3. Recommendations and suggestions

For the Ministry of Education and Training

The current team of accreditors is very thin compared to the practical needs of accreditation work of educational institutions and training programs, carrying out a large amount of work on quality assessment today. Therefore, the Ministry of Education and Training needs to regularly organize testing activities for auditor certification so that individuals can participate in the certification exam, contributing to building a stronger team of auditors to meet the actual requirements.

For Thai Nguyen University

There are more specific guidance documents for member universities on the accreditation of educational facilities and training programs so that the universities can facilitate implementation; regularly organize training classes to improve knowledge and skills for quality assurance staff; establishing a quality assurance network of Thai Nguyen University is for leaders and staff working in quality assurance of member universities to connect, cooperate and support each other in activities related to the quality accreditation.

For the Thai Nguyen University of Technology

The university shall consider allocating and devoting appropriate resources to improve the effectiveness of accreditation in all aspects based on proposed appropriate solutions, focusing on propaganda and education to raise awareness of officials, lecturers and learners about the importance of accreditation. Besides, focus resources to build a professional team in assessment through increased studying, visiting, and exchanging with domestic

universities and in the network of universities in the Southeast Asia.

Conclusion

The educational institution quality accreditation certification is a recognition of continuous and effective efforts, consistent with the university's mission from its inception to the present. Notably, the Thai Nguyen University of Technology has implemented a strategy and development plan to ensure the quality and seriousness. Training programs are developed and compared with advanced training programs of many other countries around the world. The volume of knowledge is consistent with the university's development goals and the structure is reasonable and unified. Academic activities and student support, scientific research activities and international cooperation have obtained a lot of successes. In the coming time, the university will continue to promote its strength and advantages as one of the core applied universities in the country, continuing to improve shortcomings and limitations to improve training quality, scientific research and community services.

References

1. Tran Thuy Anh, *Ensuring and accrediting the quality of higher education in the context of university autonomy: Theory and Practice*, Hanoi National University Publishing House, 2021.
2. Ministry of Education and Training (2015), *National standard regulations for higher education institutions*, Circular No. 24/2015/TT-BGD&DT, September 23, 2015.
3. Ministry of Education and Training, *Regulations on quality accreditation of educational institutions*, Circular No. 12/2017/TT-BGD&DT, dated May 19, 2017.
4. Ministry of Education and Training, *Regulations on public implementation for educational and training institutions under the national education system*, Circular No. 36/2017/TT, December 28, 2017.
5. Cuong NH. Distinguishing 3 models of quality assurance in higher education: Quality accreditation, quality assessment and quality audit, VNU Science Magazine: Educational Research, 2017:33:91-96.
6. National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, *Education Law*, 2005.
7. National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, *Law on Higher Education*, 2012.
8. National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, *Law amending and supplementing a number of articles of the Law on Higher Education*, No. 34/2018/QH14, dated November 19, 2018.
9. Quat PT. *Promoting the building of quality culture*, 2011.
(<http://www.vnu.edu.vn/btdhqghn/?C2149/N10834/day-manh-xay-dung-van-hoa-chatluong.htm>).