

Analysis of Impact Factors of the Quality Accreditation on Design and Improvement Curriculum in the University

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Received: August 1, 2021 Accepted: August 30, 2021 Online Published: September 16, 2021

doi:10.5539/res.v13n4p1

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/res.v13n4p1>

Abstract

Studies here are the to determine effects of the quality accreditation to a training program on aim, teaching method, test and assessment methods and content, outcomes to students. Consider the fields and the professions, skills and attitudes that the curriculum must address to support graduate outcomes for students. Analyze the challenges for higher education leaders to appropriate industry requirements and the effects on faculty perceptions and capacity to design a transformative educational program for students. Comparing the difference between a curriculum only has concentrated on meeting requirements and follows quality accreditation standards with a curriculum focus to experiment for students. A case study for universities in Australia and Vietnam have been considered, compared and recommended.

Keywords: quality accreditation, curriculum, higher education institution, outcomes, labour market

1. Introduction

Today, accreditation is an effective solution for improving the quality of education in higher education institutions. Although the quality accreditation and assurance frameworks, there is also a difference between countries. However, all agree that quality accreditation plays a dominant role and supports quality assurance management in the higher education system. In response to the international integration of higher education, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have encouraged governments and stakeholders to be responsible for quality accreditation activities. Internal quality accreditation (IQA) was enshrined to improve higher education institutions' quality through self-evaluation, self-accreditation, educational assessment and student/staff feedback. External quality accreditation (EQA) mainly by quality accreditation institutions. EQA has the purpose of assessing and recognizing that educational institutions and training programs have met the standards set by regulatory agencies (Endut et al., 2018; Hanh, 2020).

In Australia, the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Authority (TEQSA) is responsible for ensuring the quality of higher education. TEQSA has sets of standards and criteria to measure students' quality of learning and experience, measure of teaching, management, and student achievement. For more than thirty years, the quality of education and training in Australia has been measured through a framework set by benchmarks to provide evidence of quality. Australian universities have been provided with sets of standards for accreditation of sectors and are reflected in course profiles. These contents are important reference points in the curriculum design process and are the driving force for career accreditation, ensuring graduates are professionally employed. Since 2015, the Higher Education Standards Framework (HESF) has driven the design, governance and delivery of curriculum to Australian universities through a set of quality indicators and standards. Meeting the standards well affects the reputation, funding, marketing and admissions to universities in Australia (Wood et al., 2019).

Vietnam began to promulgate official regulations on educational quality accreditation in 2007. From that, assurance quality and accreditation quality became a critical mission and has required by law. The Vietnamese government encourages universities to increase their autonomy and self-accountability to society in terms of their demands. IQA to internal improve higher education institutions' quality through self-evaluation, self-accreditation, educational assessment, and student and staff feedback and is the basis for the EQA system to assess and accredit universities (Higher education Law, 2018). The quality management of education in Vietnam is the Department of Quality Management of the Ministry of Education and Training, which has provided a complete set of standards and criteria for training program quality accreditation (Circular 23, 2011; Circular 33, 2014; Circular 49, 2012; Circular 04, 2016).

In general, there has been an increasing focus on higher education quality and on changing community expectations. These have reflected the international higher education context and increased demand for measuring and quality accreditation and have become essential for developing the higher education system.

In this work, we do a case study of the viewpoints of curriculum design in the Charles Sturt University of Australia and contact the practice and comparison with the Tan Trao University in Vietnam. Consider the relationship between accreditation and curriculum design after internal and external accreditation activity. Find out how the pressures of accreditation affect leaders and lecturers of higher educations in requiring to meet the needs of stakeholders. At the same time, evaluate the relationship between quality accreditation standards and curriculum content so that program design creates motivation for quality assurance or creates passivity for teachers and learners?

2. Study Contents and Discussions

2.1 Effects of the Accreditation Work on the Curriculum in Higher Education - Viewpoints for Argument

Higher education quality generally and curriculum quality, in particular, included consistency of cost, performance, processed, inputs, outputs and resources. Have many frameworks, approaches, and perspectives around define curriculum quality and the effects of quality accreditation activities on the quality of the curriculum. Thus could not clearly determine the quality of higher education and curriculum without a common framework (Kundu, 2016; Hanh et al., 2020).

2.1.1 Viewpoints the Influence of External Quality Accreditation on the Designing and Improving Curriculum

We found that accreditation in Australia and Vietnam is given equal importance by analyzing a few case studies (Harvey and Williams, 2010a, 2010b; Hanh, 2019). However, concerns about its effectiveness, such as the quality accreditation process in the context of higher education, development of socio-economic and political mechanisms, are different. In general, in Australia, the universities believed that external accreditation does not necessarily lead to an improvement in the quality of curricula and learning programs (Wood, Auhl and McCarthy, 2019). In Vietnam, a training program has been certified by external accreditors, meaning a program of good quality, but subject to continuous cyclical improvement (Hanh, 2019a; Hanh et al., 2020).

The pressures of external accreditation on the university are not always enthusiastically responded to by insiders. In Australia, lecturers argue that quality accreditation measures have affected academic autonomy and freedom (Harvey & Williams, 2010b), therefore, it cannot say that the quality accreditation system has enhanced academic autonomy and independence. In Vietnam, by contrast, university leaders and lecturers believe that external accreditation has confirmed that their educational program is optimal and does not affect autonomy and freedom to learn of students and teach lecturers (Hanh, 2019).

Therefore, to compare and discuss the influence of accreditation on curricula, the following points of view should be discussed: (1) External quality accreditation is beneficial to higher education institutions rather than training programs? (2) Accreditation standards tend towards fixed statements to control while the quality of education usually change and is only relative. (3) These viewpoints above need to be analyzed in the context of increased competition between higher education institutions in each country (Christian Laval, 2019). Every university wants students after graduation to best respond to the labour market. Therefore, transparency of curriculum design and cognizance of the profession will allow the curriculum to connect with the labour market closely. (4) Accreditation standards play a role in promoting the design, development and improvement of curricula in universities.

These viewpoints above need to be analyzed in the context of increased competition between higher education institutions in each country. The need for products best meets the labour market is the desire of all universities. Transparency of curriculum design and cognizance of the profession will allow the curriculum to connect with the labour market closely. Should not be overly promoted the external accreditation results, which will result in the educational institution being self-satisfied and not trying to continue to make curriculum improvements (Michael Apple, 1979).

2.1.2 Viewpoints the Influence of Internal Quality Accreditation on the Designing and Improving Curriculum

There are similarities in assessment about internal accreditation impact for curriculum between Australia and Vietnam. Both said that IQA systems for curriculums in universities, especially local universities, tough to implement for the following reasons (Hanh, 2019a; Wood et al., 2019): (1) The curriculum accreditation in school to be regarded as a burden on top of other workloads. (2) Management methods that were not part of regular academic activity challenged the link between intention and practice. (3) The quality accreditation activities intrusive and described as critical, imposed by the administration for reporting. (4) The quality accreditation activities are unsupported by professional development and contribute to stress for education institutes and lecturers. (5) The quality accreditation activities bound in measures of student performance and success without acknowledging the impact of student history and capabilities.

Although many factors confirm internal quality accreditation contributed to increased quality learning. However, Harvey

and Williams (2010a, b) still suggested that the quality measurement in teaching and learning that follows each institution's rules was not as effective as imagined due to a culture of academic freedom in the faculties and training majors. From that, Harvey and Williams concluded that there had been an improvement in transparency, documentation of processes and curriculum improvement, and internalization and standardization of quality assurance processes in university environments in Australia. Nevertheless, there has still been much discussion around the effectiveness of program quality after improvement and assessment. Thus, the challenge of quality accreditation to increase curriculum effectiveness is not yet resolved but instead identified as an ongoing question to be pursued. This issue also being discussed a lot in Vietnam. Many criteria in set accreditation standards are being applied not really suitable with the reality to the curriculum design of many universities, especially for local universities, and the development of Vietnam's socio-economy comparison with other developed countries.

2.2 The Main Factors Affecting the Viewpoint of Design and Improvement of a Curriculum

Higher education institutions need to personalize teaching and learning because the quality of training depends a lot on the teaching staff. The focus of curriculum design and development are the lecturer and course content - the overall curriculum is connected from many subjects. The approach to learning content creates different and diverse experiences for students that can impact the quality of training. During the development of the training program, each institution has taken an approach to design structures steeped in its culture, providing students with a unique learning experience to graduation.

The process of students' learning in universities be considered as gathering information from the curriculum and teaching of the lecturers and reproducing it to perform in a profession. More recent time, most fields and professions and teaching and learning in higher education had rapid change. The complex including globalization, the world of knowledge and expertise as a world flat, and too many unforeseen problems in all areas along with the speed development of science and technology was heavily appearance and influence to the curriculum design, to create graduates who able to work suitably with reality (Frenk et al., 2015).

Graduates must quickly process a large amount of information through the knowledge learned in the university, thereby making decisions to complete the job. The complex social and academic environment has required lecturers to proactively innovate, change the way they teach and collaborate to design a diverse curriculum relevant to reality. The quality of teaching will be below and will limit students' employability after graduation if lecturers not provide specific skills and knowledge to students. These pressures in the higher education environment are often coupled with the direction of quality accreditation. In comparison, the quality of the training rather than experiential activities remains an important factor for students in employment, funding, and market labour.

2.3 Viewpoints of the Overall Procedure of Curriculum Design and Improvement - The Basic Foundation for Quality Curriculum

The training quality of universities and graduates must be relevant to all stakeholders. Therefore, curriculum development must be continually renewed and improved and driven by challenges to the status quo of education and profession. The curriculum focuses on connection to provide deep and broad knowledge to students and must be flexible. From there, it provides students with fundamental to advanced learning for self-study and transformation. The curriculum is intended to meet both the external quality accreditation standards and the internal standards required by each higher education institution.

To improve the quality of training. It is necessary to develop a curriculum design process that reflects the relationships between subjects, focusing on testing and assessment methods for students, appropriateness of testing, assessment with results, learning frameworks, and connections between current knowledge and prior knowledge students have received (Lawson, 2015).

As in Australia, universities in Vietnam also design curricula based on linkages between subjects and focus on outcomes for students. Integrate career standards with higher education standards to define the outcomes of each field, and then determine what students need upon graduation, from that work backwards to design curricula that meet these needs. The essential to this process is to combine groups of knowledge to create a purposeful curriculum relevant to training reality and the labour market.

Designing a curriculum is the job of universities, while accreditation standards of management units can influence universities' decisions about the content of the curriculum. But for students, universities need to determine the design of a curriculum that enables students to achieve good academic quality to receive scholarships or building an appropriate curriculum that meets the requirements of the labour market. Which issue is more important? (Harvey and Williams, 2010b).

3. Case Study: The Main Viewpoints on the Curriculum Design of Charle Sturt University and Comparison Reality for Tan Trao University

This section presents a case study to illustrate the problem that has been analysed above by considering viewpoints on Charle Sturt University (CSE) curriculum design and contacts reality for Tan Trao University (TTrU).

The CSU is dispersed in nine regions of Australia (six campuses and three Studies Centre), the main campus in Sydney city. According to its mission and vision, it hopes to meet the needs of the society and provide employable graduates and support the development of the area and locally (<https://www.csu.edu.au/>).

The TTrU has three campuses in Tuyen Quang province in the Northern mountain regions in Viet Nam, has a mission as a training institution, scientific research, international cooperation, and the provision of products and services to improve the quality of life, build the country. The vision will become a centre of sustainable development, transforming lives and serving the community (<https://daihoctantrao.edu.vn/>).

In 2018, redesigned nine CSU curricula. These curriculums has been tested and implemented for many years. There has been considerable pressure for the program to meet the accrediting institutions' accreditation standards and require all nine curricula to meet the same set of criteria. The redesign process begins with analysing all academic impact factors, possible risks, employer feedback on training programs, and analysis of career and market labour. The design team then writes a draft program and uses CourseSpace software to tweak the designed draft program, producing a matrix of accreditation standards based on the curriculum modification (Switching Curriculum, 2017; Charles Sturt University, <https://www.csu.edu.au/>).

In TTrU, during 2018, six curriculums also redesign, have adjustment, addition according to the cycle every 2.5 years and three curriculums preparing for external accreditation work. The curriculums had licensed by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) six years ago. Curriculum redesign (improvement) was also considerable pressure to meet the accreditation standards set by the MOET (Circular 04, 2016). All of the curriculums must be reviewed to complete according to the same set of criteria. The redesign process in TTrU (and many other universities in Viet Nam) began from old curriculum analysis, considering the student's outcomes, feedback to employers' curriculum, and market labour needs. All risks are not considered. Next is integrating the sets of standards from the profession and expertise framework standards issued by MOET (not from accrediting agencies like the CSU) into a single set to carry higher education institution approval leaders. The draft curriculum is not adjusted with software tools like CSU (Nguyen, 2018).

There are two different approaches to the program building process. TTrU's approach relies heavily on available curricula and alignment with accreditation standards. Much of the time was spent analyzing the evidence and formulating the descriptions, tasks. The result is the curriculum was rewritten according to the style and wording of these documents. Faculty leaders are not deeply involved in the early stages of the design but mainly consider the performance requirements according to the criteria of the quality accreditation index. There is little time to map the links or look at the interrelationships at all levels of the course regarding how subjects work together to deliver knowledge to students. Therefore, students' adaptation to the volatile labour market will be limited.

CSU's approach is more holistic than TTrU's, focusing on both the student experience and accreditation standards. Following their process, the curriculum design delivered an authentic student experience, concepts learned throughout the course with increasing complexity, and a deep understanding to support their development of student development after graduation. Identifying evidence to meet course learning outcomes is considered essential by the program development team to help students grow throughout the course. Mapping to the quality accreditation requirements is also done, but there is no overwhelming pressure to copy the standards back into the program (Wood et al., 2019).

The curriculum design of both universities is based on the desire for the best quality training for students after graduation. Conforms to accreditation standards and meets employer needs.

Faculty leadership in TTrU has spent a lot of time reviewing, revising, testing, and adjusting language and description in separate subjects in the curriculum. They have very little time to do educational activities, consult with instructors or overview the entire course.

In contrast, the CSU leaders' approach maintained an overall picture of the curriculum, led the team through changes, and made adjustments according to accreditation standards. The program development experience allows them to consider and choose the program and course to make a positive change in student understanding. As a result, CSU's approach is more effective than TTrU's in designing high-quality curricula, and graduates are more responsive to the labour market.

The case study of TTrU and CSU and comparison had highlighted the strong dependence on accreditation requirements of the quality curriculum when design or improving. Thus there are the following recommendations for designing a curriculum:

- (1) The approach to curriculum design requires time, collaboration, listening to different points of view, open-mindedness, and a combination of theoretical and practical knowledge.
- (2) Before starting to design, develop or improve a training program. It is necessary to answer the question, "in the future, what qualities and competencies should students have for their careers?"
- (3) The training program is designed to improve the quality of training and meet the requirements of the set of quality accreditation standards of accreditation institutions.

4. Conclusions

This article has analyzed the relationship between curriculum quality and accreditation standards in higher education. Considering the curriculum, we believe that the university will have a good curriculum if it meets the wishes of the stakeholders. The graduates will meet the needs of the labour market. At the same time, the curriculum needs to comply with the criteria of quality control.

For a better hands-on program for students, lecturers have to use their expertise, knowledge, and skills to design or improve a purposeful curriculum. From that provides grants students the ability to acquire knowledge to work in a volatile labour market and create new knowledge that brings their change in the future towards the profession.

Therefore, a good curriculum must generate change for students and continuous improvement. In addition to providing students with basic information, knowledge, and skills, it is still necessary for students to make a difference in the future, which indicates the quality of learning that designers have curriculum design should aim for.

Acknowledgement

Authors thanks the Tantrao University and VNU University of Education for support of this study.

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