

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND

**QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE UNIVERSITY SECTOR:
COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES IN VIETNAM AND
AUSTRALIA**

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Abstract

Quality assurance is now an important aspect of most higher education systems in both developed and developing nations (UNESCO, 2013b). Accordingly, in this study, stakeholder's perceptions towards quality assurance in universities were explored and the current quality assurance policies and practices critically examined through two case study sites: a university member of a regional university in Hanoi, Vietnam (U-VN) and a school of education in a regional university located in New South Wales, Australia (SOE-AU). Through a close examination of quality assurance policies and system procedures, current quality assurance systems are explained, and the similarities and differences between the two institutions are cross-compared.

In this research, the perceptions of academic leaders and staff into the experience of quality assurance systems in the two university case studies were analysed. Both qualitative and quantitative inquiry study methods were used, as they were considered appropriate tools to better understand the quality assurance measures. This study involved both a comparative and mixed methods methodology that was composed of interviews, questionnaires, and literature and documentation searches to develop the case studies (Burke & Tuner, 2003).

The results of the study indicated that the two universities have many similarities and differences in both quality assurance policies and the implementation of quality assurance systems between the two university case studies. The findings demonstrated that at the university level, the academic leaders and academic staff share a common understanding about quality assurance, but with a wide range of meanings. This understanding related to the main features of each university and the current essential factors impacting on the delivery of quality assurance within the two case study universities. In terms of quality assurance as practice, both universities publish statements describing their quality assurance system as a process for maintaining standards and promoting quality teaching, learning and research activities. However, one significant difference observed was that the SOE-AU had more experience with quality assurance than the U-VN, as it is one of the oldest universities in Australia.

Also, the SOE-AU had a relatively higher staff capacity, and deeply held beliefs in academic values. Furthermore, the SOE-AU quality assurance system was closely linked to national policy conditions and international quality assurance higher education standards. Whereas, the U-VN is a relatively young university in Vietnam, therefore the quality assurance system at U-VN was undergoing major changes with a step-by-step approach to enhancing and developing the quality assurance system. It was considered that, the rich experience of quality assurance implementation at the SOE-AU could provide some useful lessons for the U-VN in particular and Vietnamese universities in general. The findings in this study contribute to a further understanding of quality assurance policy and implementation in the two university case studies. In this study, the implications from these findings for higher education policy makers and researchers are discussed to assist with further development quality assurance in universities.

Thesis Certification

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses, software and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.



Signature of Candidate

7/11/17

Date

ENDORSEMENT

Signature of Supervisor/s



Date

07/11/2017

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Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Term
AAUT	Australian Awards for University Teaching
AG	Australian Government
AGTEQSA	Australian Government, the State Government of NSW, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
AHEQAF	Australian Higher Education Quality Assurance Framework
APP	Accreditation of Professional Programs
APQA	Higher Education Standard Network including the Asia Pacific Quality Network
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
AQFC	Australian Qualification Framework Council
AU	Higher education institution in Australia
AUQA	Australian University Quality Agency
CEQARD	Centre of Education Quality Assurance and Research Development
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training, Australia
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DTEQA	Department of Testing and Education Quality Accreditation
DTEQIEQA	The Department of Testing and Education Quality the Institute of Education Quality Assurance
EQA	External Quality Assurance
HEA	Higher Education Act
HEI	Higher Education Institution
INQAAHE	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance

ISO	International Organisation for Standardization
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRA	Provisional Regulations on Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QAC	Quality Assurance Centre
SQC	Strategy and Quality Committee
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
TLS	Teaching and Learning Support
TQM	Total Quality Management
SOE-AU	School of Education case study in Australia
U-VN	University case study in Vietnam
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organisation
VN	Higher education institution in Vietnam
VNHEQA	Vietnam's Higher Education Quality Assurance System
VSQA	Vietnamese Standards for Quality Accreditation on Higher Education
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the research

In this study, the quality assurance policies and practices of universities were examined. The application of quality assurance in universities has been increasing not only in developed countries, but also in developing countries (UNESCO, 2013b; Westerheijden, Stensaker, & Rosa, 2007). The literature about quality assurance in higher education shows that the purpose of publishing quality assurance systems in universities is to promote and maintain the quality of teaching, learning, researching, and other university services. To achieve this purpose, quality assurance systems in universities are required to respond to the demands of both external quality assurance (EQA) and, internal quality assurance (IQA) systems. EQA systems include responses to the demands of government, quality assurance agencies and other relevant stakeholders. While, IQA systems include responses to the internal demands of university schools and the wider university itself.

The history of quality assurance in developed countries is clearly identified in that quality assurance was first introduced into the higher education sector by the governments of most the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries in the mid-1980s. During the late 20th century, quality assurance became a central concept and core policies for higher education were established in most OECD countries (Brennan & Shah, 2000a). According to Pillay, Hitendra, Kimber, and Megan (2009), quality assurance in universities has captured growing interest, as evidenced by the increasing number of national and transnational bodies engaged in this pursuit. For instance, with globalisation and its implications, quality assurance in higher education has become a major phenomenon worldwide (Jarvis, 2013), and the trend has been towards international quality assurance standards in higher education in both developed and developing countries (Shah, Nair, & Wilson, 2011). There is a long history of quality assurance development in universities, and significant examples of quality assurance approaches were first demonstrated in some developed countries. For example, the United States of America (US) has the

longest history of formal EQA in the form of accreditation, which has played an important role in higher education since at least 1944 (Stella, 2006). Later, in the United Kingdom (UK), there were three key quality assurance developments: the Research Assessment Exercises published in the 1980s, followed by the Teaching Quality Assessments in the 1990s, and the Subject Benchmarks, which are a continuing development (Lim, 2001).

In a similar vein in recent years, many universities in developing countries have followed their counterparts in developed countries by adopting quality assurance systems to improve the quality of teaching, learning, research and direct community service programs (Stella, 2006). Research into quality assurance in the university sector has been of increasing interest in recent years (Lim, 2001; Madden, 2014; Nguyen, 2016; Pule, 2014; Rattananuntapat, 2015; Shah et al., 2011; Stephenson & Yorke, 2013; Vann, 2012; Westerheijden et al., 2007). Also, the United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (2013b) notes that nearly half of UNESCO countries in the world have created quality assurance mechanisms for maintaining the quality of higher education so that academic institutions ensure that their students graduate with knowledge, skills and attitudes that meet international standards. Furthermore, the aim of implementing a quality assurance system is to ensure the high quality of the academic environment including teaching, learning, curriculum and the university's structures such as buildings and other physical resources. Quality assurance also provides an objective review of a university and quality assurance strategies can improve the overall university institutional profile (Sallis, 2014).

Today, quality assurance in universities is increasingly significant for two reasons. Firstly, the expansion of the university sector and growth of international quality assurance in universities is a global trend that has led to greater pressure on each higher education institution. To address these challenges, both governments and university institutions have reviewed and published a variety of quality assurance systems and mechanisms to maintain a high quality of education. Secondly, the existence of higher education in each country not only depends on government, but also depends on the quality assessments by relevant stakeholders, such as students, lecturers, supporting staff, parents and workplace/industries. To enable institutions to

continue their role in education they inevitably have to organize quality assurance. Since stakeholders will always undertake ongoing assessment, quality assurance should promote continuous improvement (Haris, 2013). As a result, quality assurance has increasingly become an essential strategy in universities in both developed and developing countries.

Unfortunately, a fundamental problem undermines attempts to develop effective quality assurance in universities. Quality assurance is a concept, a philosophy, and a journey, which is experienced generally but may look different in practice (Westerheijden et al., 2007). In this sense, the understanding of quality assurance in universities has always been a controversial issue for many educators. The literature about quality assurance in universities also shows that the differences in stakeholders' perceptions about quality assurance can be affected by the stakeholder positions involved in the management and delivery of higher education (Newton, 2000). There are also contextual and cultural differences that can affect stakeholders' understanding of quality assurance (Lim, 2011). Therefore, researching quality assurance in universities has become challenging due to the journey and different conceptions of quality assurance in universities, nationally and internationally.

In this study, I focused on the quality assurance in universities, specifically in Vietnam and Australia. Australia has a long history of policy development and implementation of quality assurance. The Australian Government (AG) (2014b) points out that Australian universities have always been concerned with quality and quality assurance to promote their quality of teaching, learning and research. With the expansion of the university sector in the 1970s and the late 1980s, the latter resulting from the abolition of the binary system, which includes colleges of advanced education, it was no longer possible to strive for quality informally using the British 'gold standard', which had been the benchmark of excellence until then. In November 1992, the Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education was established. The first Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) was established in 1995, and in 2000, the Australian University Quality Agency (AUQA) was instigated. Currently, both EQA and IQA systems are published in all university institutions across Australia (Mishra, 2007). For instance, in an evaluation of quality assurance, the AG (2014a) asserted that the current Australian higher education

quality assurance has excellent internal quality management, a quality framework, Commonwealth monitoring, external quality audits, recognition of university qualifications, research assessment, student surveys and other relevant university activities. As a result, the Australian quality assurance approach has been exported to many other countries such as Singapore and Malaysia (Lim, 2001). In addition, to enhance the quality of Australian higher education within international higher education fields, the Australian Government has encouraged stakeholders to move to a new approach that focuses on outcomes and appropriate standards (AG, 2014a).

In Vietnam, quality assurance is mainly national and has been an institutional issue only for the last two decades (Fry, 2009). For instance, according to the Vietnamese Ministry of Education Training (MoET) (2011), compared to many other countries in the world, Vietnam is still regarded as a developing country with a low level of competitiveness in Vietnamese universities, poor technologies and lack of investment capital for educational development. The quality of teaching, learning and research in universities, does not yet meet international standards (Harman, Hayden, & Nghi, 2010). Hence, currently, quality assurance improvement in universities is an essential and necessary factor to promote Vietnamese university development and remediation, but this is likely to take some time (MoET, 2014d).

In this study, to understand the current quality assurance in the two university case studies in the context of real work, comparative case studies in Vietnam and Australia were undertaken. This approach was chosen to identify the similarities, differences and gaps between the two universities. The findings of the study provide key understandings from quality assurance experiences for universities in general and the two case studies in particular. This study also sought to derive theoretical explanations for the implementation of quality assurance activities in each university to identify priorities for improvement. The work for this study commenced in 2014, and the data collection for the two university case studies was conducted in 2015. In the next section, my professional rationale for this study is further discussed.

1.2 Evolution of this study from my experiences

My experiences growing up in Vietnam as well as working for ten years in a university informed my understandings that the university sector is one of the most important pillars of Vietnam's development during this global and international era. However, a long history of feudalism, colonialism, war and poverty has resulted in a low level of quality in the university sector compared with other nations and current higher education international standards. Access to high-quality tertiary education has been an unreachable goal for many generations of commoners and working class Vietnamese. My interest in pursuing quality assurance issues in Vietnamese universities is motivated by several concerns.

Firstly, I wish to contribute to the development of quality assurance in Vietnamese universities. Throughout my years of working in a university, I realized that there was very limited practice or research in the field of quality assurance in Vietnam. As a result, both the Vietnamese Government and university institutions have borrowed policies and practices from other countries, or tried to copy quality assurance models from foreign countries. This practice often resulted in the unsuccessful adoption of imported quality assurance policies and practices. In my experience, the success of quality assurance implementation in universities is influenced by various elements, such as the quality of human resources, provision of physical resources, and other fundamental facilities. Vietnamese universities appear to lack the contextual relevance and conditions for adopting quality assurance processes and to usefully implement these. In other words, options for an instrumental approach to quality assurance in universities can only work if a number of prior conditions are met. Thus, I believe Vietnam's university sector should seek to successfully apply quality assurance for improving teaching, learning, and research in the context of local expansion, and that is my primary study interest.

Secondly, the current higher education reports from MoET and research show that the low quality in Vietnamese universities can be considered the greatest challenge now being faced, and greater efforts need to be made to improve them. Universities that better meet the needs of the society and the regional and international standards of the future are required. Consequently, a quality assurance system needs to be implemented with more attention to both policy and practice development. This has raised concerns in Vietnam of many educational policymakers and researchers.

Thirdly, Vietnam's government is currently applying an American quality assurance approach to all higher education institutions which has led to concerns and negative effects in these universities (Hayden & Thiep, 2010). There are differences between conditions within Vietnamese universities and those in the USA. For example, the Vietnamese Government divides universities into three groups: elite, urban-based and rural-based. These differences indicate a need to identify the quality assurance conditions suitable for each group. Therefore, in my view, copying the quality assurance system from a developed country without adapting it to the local circumstances has numerous disadvantages, and will most likely frustrate adoption.

Fourthly, the Australian Government has implemented a range of programs and projects to help Vietnamese universities during the last ten years. These have been identified as curriculum innovation, technology and human resources. For example, the first university with 100 percent foreign investment in Vietnam was the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), which is an international university in Vietnam. Currently, many Australian universities have effective positive working relationships with Vietnam (UNESCO, 2006). Therefore, the climate for cooperation in higher education between the two governments is an important foundation for Vietnam in moving towards the improvement of quality in universities in general and for adapting Australian quality assurance measures to Vietnam's situation.

It is on the basis of these long-standing professional concerns and observations that I proposed this doctoral study. My ultimate aim is to witness the improvement of quality in Vietnamese universities akin to international standards and expectations. However, at the commencement of the study, I had a very limited awareness of myself as researcher within the frame of the research picture. To achieve my study goals, I was initially of the belief that I must engage with academic leaders and staff in the two universities who had a strong of interest in quality assurance. Further, a number of questions arose in my mind and emerged from reviewing the literature about higher education quality assurance with regards to university staff perceptions on quality assurance policies and practices. I sought two university case studies and was keen to examine to what extent the case studies had achieved their quality assurance objectives. As a result, this study presents an exploration of current

existing quality assurance policy and practices and understandings of the similarities and differences in quality assurance between the two case study universities with the express aim of informing how quality assurance might be improved.

1.3 Research purposes and research questions

The core purpose of the study was to present a comprehensive examination and analysis of the experiences, contributions and concerns identified in the university case studies that are relevant to quality assurance improvement. The specific research purposes and research questions are presented as follows.

1.3.1 Purposes of the study

The time and resources available have led to this study being implemented with a focus on current quality assurance processes in the two universities, the U-VN and the SOE-AU. Through interpretations of academic leader and staff participants' statements about current quality assurance policies and practices, the following understandings were explored: (1) perceptions about quality assurance concepts in their respective universities; (2) understandings about current quality assurance policies and implementation for maintaining high quality teaching, learning and research; and (3) identification of any similarities, differences and gaps in the quality assurance systems between the two universities.

The ultimate purpose was to provide academic leaders, staff and policy makers with information on the current quality assurance status in their university institutions, with the expectation of not only contributing to knowledge about quality assurance development at government and institutional levels, but also potentially enhancing quality assurance policies and the implementation of quality assurance systems. On a broader scale, this study raises questions about the contextualisation of quality assurance systems in an era of increasing globalisation.

1.3.2 Research questions

The main research question that guided this study was: "How do stakeholders understand and implement quality assurance in their current practices?"

This question was elaborated in three ways: Firstly, a focus on how the two selected countries developed and implemented quality assurance in their universities through investigating quality assurance policies at the national level. Secondly, the focus was on the quality assurance of teaching, learning and research activities for on-campus undergraduate students. Distance teaching and learning or other methods of program delivery was not included. Thirdly, it was aimed to generate deeper understandings of the experience of quality assurance for maintaining the quality of teaching, learning and research activities in the two university case studies.

The specific sub- questions explored in this study are as follows:

1. What is the nature of quality assurance generally in universities in Vietnam and Australia?
2. How do the research participants view quality assurance in the U-VN and the SOE-AU?
3. How are quality assurance policies and practices evidenced in the case study universities?
4. What are the influential factors concerned and how does each institution approach the process of enhancing quality assurance?
5. What are the similarities and differences in the quality assurance policies, how are they implemented and how do they compare in the two target universities?
6. What recommendations might be learned from an analysis of Australian quality assurance as evident in government policies, documents and quality assurance practices at the SOE-AU that are likely to inform quality assurance for Vietnamese universities in general and the quality assurance system at the U-VN in particular?

I examined these research questions to understand quality assurance in the two universities through an investigation of participants' statements about their current quality assurance systems in terms of policy and implementation.

1.4 Definition of the key concepts

Definitions of the key concepts are provided to assist the reader in understanding the information within this study:

Quality in higher education: The means by which an ongoing process exists to ensure the delivery of agreed standards. These agreed standards applying to a university's or institution's teaching and learning, thereby ensuring that the educational institution has the potential to achieve a high quality of content knowledge, skills and values evident in results (Lewis, Millar, Todorovski, & Kažoka, 2013).

Quality assurance in higher education: This term is a process by which a university or institution can guarantee with confidence and certainty, that the standards and quality of its educational provision are being maintained and enhanced (Ryan, 2015).

Quality accreditation: Accreditation is a process by which a university or institution periodically has an overall or partial evaluation of its educational activity which is officially recognised. The aim of this evaluation is to determine whether and how the educational objectives of the institution are achieved. The results obtained should comply with certain standards, which are specific to other comparable institutions of higher education at a given time. Accreditation is also an appropriate tool for stimulating and accelerating a university's growth and development to achieve excellence, relevance, and effectiveness. The final goal of accreditation is to promote a university's education in terms of broadly acceptable levels of quality (Schindler, Puls-Elvidge, Welzant, & Crawford, 2015; Schwarz & Westerheijden, 2007; Stimac & Katic, 2015).

Internal quality assurance: The process includes monitoring instruments, evaluation instruments and activities aiming at improvement of a university's teaching and learning, research and community services (Mishra, 2007).

External quality assurance: The term is a process that includes benchmark activities, external audit or external quality assessment aiming at providing a quality label for benchmarking or delivering feedback on the self-evaluation of a university or institution (Ryan, 2015).

Quality assurance of teaching staff: A university should have academic staff members who are qualified and competent to conduct the core in teaching and learning, research and community services (Coates, 2010).

Quality assurance of facilities: A university should have clear procedures to ensure that the quality of the facilities needed for student learning and research are adequate and appropriate for each program or project offered (Nightingale & O'Neil, 2012; OECD, 2012).

Quality assurance of the student support: A university should have clear procedures to assure the quality of the student support and student counseling (Coates, 2010).

These definitions of key concept are further discussed in Chapter 2.

1.5 Significance of the study

The study of quality assurance in universities is not new, as numerous studies worldwide have investigated the policies and practices of quality assurance in universities: however most of them have investigated the approaches used in developed countries. Very little research has documented quality assurance in developing countries (UNESCO, 2013a). In this context, this comparative study will investigate the current quality assurance policies and practices in a university in Australia and a university in Vietnam as broadly representative of both developed countries and developing countries. In particular, the study investigates how the selected universities have improved their quality assurance performance. The study includes the strategies they have adopted, the innovations attempted, the management approaches undertaken, and the challenges addressed.

The findings potentially provide valuable knowledge for educational administration at the national and institutional level not only in Australia, but also in Vietnam where improvement in quality assurance is highly sought. The findings of this study could be useful for fostering cooperation between the institutional governing bodies of Australian and Vietnamese universities by highlighting some significant areas that can be shared between the institutions. It is also expected that by drawing on Australian experiences, this study may facilitate the provision of effective quality assurance,

thereby improving the quality of teaching and learning in undergraduate education in Vietnam drawing on Australian experiences. Finally, the findings of the study may assist other countries to better understand the quality assurance system in Vietnamese universities, and it may also provide useful insights for other South-East Asian countries trying to review and improve quality assurance in their university sectors.

In addition to the benefits for the university case studies, the results of this study may be useful for enhancing quality assurance through providing understandings for both academic leaders and staff of the present status of their respective quality assurance systems. Also, this study may provide understandings and knowledge about quality assurance that helps participants from the two universities bridge gaps between the literature and actual practice. Finally, the research findings are essential for U-VN, which is seeking cooperation and assistance from developed country universities to promote quality assurance.

1.6 Overview of thesis

This thesis comprises eight chapters, followed by references and appendices. The first three chapters provide a background to the research including an overview of the study, an examination of the literature related to quality assurance in the university sector and an outline of the methodological procedures and perspectives. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present the data gathered, and a discussion of the research findings. Chapters 7 and 8 provide a comparison of the two case studies and a conclusion.

Chapter 1 is divided into three main sections. In the first section, the background to the study is described. In the second section, the research purpose, main research questions, subsidiary questions, and the significance of the study are described, and lastly, the study's outline is presented.

In Chapter 2, the literature that supports the rationale for the research and provides a theoretical foundation is examined. In this chapter, the nature of quality assurance in

universities is outlined, including the identification of quality, quality assurance concepts in universities, implementation of quality assurance systems, influential factors, instruments for quality assurance evaluation and the approaches to quality assurance development.

In Chapter 3, the methodological procedures and perspectives utilized in this study are presented. In this chapter, the mixed-methods design, the selection of participants, the data collection procedures, the data management and analysis are discussed. This chapter also includes the ethical issues and methodological challenges of a comparative case study.

In Chapter 4, the quality assurance systems related to national and institutional levels of the two university case studies are discussed. The analysis of policies at the two universities includes the universities' quality assurance models, roles and codes, quality assurance criteria and methods of quality assurance evaluation. This chapter also includes the specific quality assurance policies that relate to teaching, learning, research and the responses to the IQA and EQA processes in each university.

In Chapters 5 and 6, the data from interviews and questionnaires and the report on the perceptions of quality assurance among academic leaders and staff at the two universities are presented. Firstly, the understandings of academic leaders and staff about the quality assurance in their respective universities is briefly presented. Subsequently, participants' statements about quality assurance policies and, the quality assurance for maintaining the quality of teaching, learning and research are presented. Current factors affecting quality assurance implementation in each university are then analysed. Finally, current approaches for enhancing quality assurance within the institution are given.

In Chapter 7, a comparison between the two university case studies is presented, based on the findings of the study in Chapters 5 and 6. The significant similarities and differences between the quality assurance systems in the two university case studies are highlighted.

In Chapter 8, major findings are present. It also provides a reiteration of the study's significance and implementation and, provides a framework and directions for further research.

A reference list and appendices are also provided.

The literature informing quality assurance in universities is presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 2 Literature review of quality assurance in higher education

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the literature related to the study research questions is reviewed in order to understand quality assurance in higher education in general and in the university sector in particular. The published quality assurance literature in the university sector is examined along with the methodologies used. In this section, an explanation is provided for how existing literature helped to resolve the study research aims and questions. The literature review also identifies the gaps in the understanding and knowledge in those areas that this study seeks to address to and potentially fill.

The literature is examined in four parts and deals with the key dimensions raised relating to this study. The chapter begins with identification of the concepts of quality and quality assurance in Section 2.2, followed by an exploration of the quality assurance approaches practices in universities in Section 2.3. Quality assurance practices and review methods are presented in Section, 2.4 and the conceptual framework of the study is presented in Section 2.5. Finally, the conclusion and remarks are offered in Section 2.6.

2.2 Concepts of quality and quality assurance

There are two basic concepts used in this study: Quality and quality assurance. The literature on quality and quality assurance in higher education shows that both concepts are complex and open to wide interpretation. There is much confusion about the concepts of quality in universities, and there are challenges in creating a clear definition. A range of reasons can be offered here. First, the one important product of a university is the people who graduate. It is very challenging to determine whether such an output refers to the graduates' skills they have mastered, the knowledge achieved or the overall quality of the graduates' character. In this

sense, it can be difficult to assess educational products that have always been controversial to measure. The second reason is that there are a variety of relevant educational stakeholders, such as government, policy makers, employers, and educators who have vested interests in the education products and measure such quality in financial terms. Lastly, quality and quality assurance complexity is increased by the context in which each university is located, the diversity of missions of each university, specific facilities and conditions and access to finances, information and communication technologies. Therefore, the concept of quality and quality assurance in universities is difficult to define and arises from the contexts of various relevant stakeholders. The following section begins with a variety of quality and quality assurance concepts, which will provide the basis for understanding quality and its assurance. This section also employs basic terminologies that are pervasive in the literature to define the most appropriate concepts for this study.

2.2.1 The notion of quality

Searching for quality in the context of higher education confirms that there is much relevant literature. Although in the 1990s the literature on quality in universities increased and diversified in some developed countries, the attention to quality in universities was not new, quality of teaching and learning had always been part of long held academic traditions. In recent decades, the concept of quality has become more and more important for university institutions. An important reason for this growth has been the exchange of students between universities within countries as well as between countries. It has become important to know what constitutes good quality in universities when comparing between university institutions and beyond a single country.

The literature on quality in higher education and current quality assurance systems offers a working definition of quality, however, the perception of quality in universities is a much-debated term and not easy to define, as quality is openly defined differently by various stakeholders (Mishra, 2007). As such, diverse quality mechanisms have been designed to promote different aspects of quality. Stephenson and Yorke (2013) have also noted that, “quality” is seen to be multifaceted because it

is multi-dimensional and means different things to different stakeholders. In this context, defining quality by focusing on the key points of quality is a popular way to understand the notion. Havey and Green (1993) provide seven categories for the conceptualisation of definitions about quality in higher education:

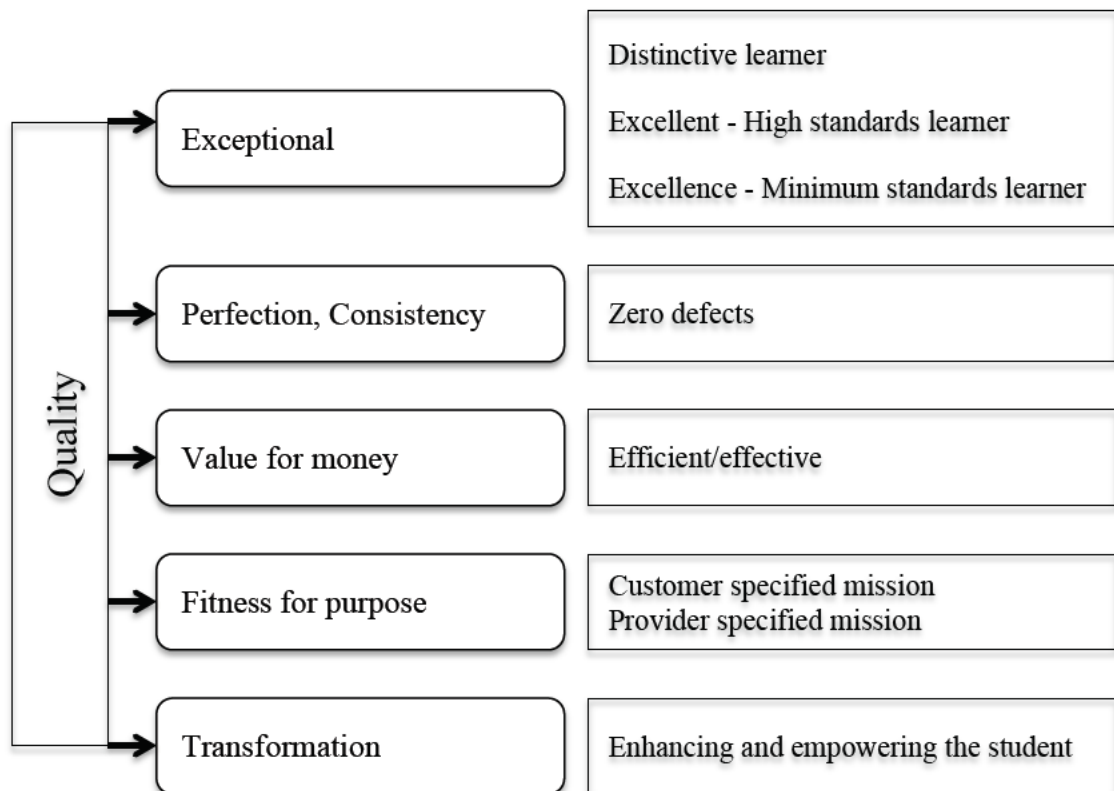
1. Excellence, whereby the university strives to do the best job possible;
2. Achieving zero defect, which is perhaps more appropriate in manufacturing environments than in educational settings;
3. The ability to continually enrich the knowledge and development of students;
4. Meeting a set of criteria, standards, norms, or expectations;
5. A philosophy for continual improvement in all aspects of human resources and work;
6. Value for money, by which quality is directly related to cost; and,
7. Fitness for purpose, whereby the purposes of higher education are defined and decided; quality is subsequently measured by how well these purposes are achieved, and this notion of quality is used by researchers and policy makers.

These key categories are significant and have been accepted by many scholars as they cover a wide range of meanings, from a traditional view of quality as “excellence” to current views such as “zero defect” and “fitness for purpose”. These latter views also address a university’s mission and consumer orientation. In the same vein, Garvin (1988) classified the various quality definitions in five key respects that were more specifically aligned to quality in higher education:

1. Transcendent definitions. Quality is defined with regard to the specific subjects and the personal views;
2. Product-based definitions. Quality can be measured based on the object attributes of the products;
3. User-based definitions. Quality is a means for customer satisfaction. This makes the definitions individual and partly subjective;
4. Manufacturing-based definitions. Quality is seen as conformance to requirements and specifications; and,

5. Value-based definitions. These definitions describe quality in relation to costs. Quality is seen as providing good value for cost.

A more inclusive definition is provided by Watty (2003), who indicates that quality in a university has five key aspects that are more relevant to the quality of teaching and learning in higher education. The five key aspects and standards for each key aspect are presented in Figure 2.1 below:



Source: Watty (2003, p. 215)

Figure 2.1: Definition of key aspects for quality

However, within the university sector, Watty (2003) also underscores that the trend for quality as perfection can be removed due to the fact that the university does not aim to produce defect-free graduates. In addition, from an educational perspective, viewing the educational products with zero defects is problematic because the product of an educational process is always multi-faceted and usually unpredictable. For example, Schindler et al. (2015) identify four broad conceptualisations of quality in higher

education that see quality as being purposeful, transformative, exceptional, and accountable. However, these definitions are still insufficient as the university could unconsciously influence decisions taken in light of the intrinsic characteristics of the universities. Therefore, a single definition of quality is not reflected by all the implemented quality assurance system activities in universities. Consequently, agreement around a definition of quality cannot be found.

The above definitions provide a general understanding of the key points related to quality concepts. It is evident that the distinctions between quality and other related terms in universities are not clear. To fill this gap, a concept based on university functions was published in the Article of the World Declaration on Higher Education published by UNESCO (1998), stating:

Quality in higher education is a multidimensional concept, which should embrace all its functions, and activities: teaching and academic programs, research and scholarship, staffing, students, buildings, facilities, equipment, services to the community and the academic environment. Internal self-evaluation and external review, conducted openly by independent specialists, if possible with international expertise, are vital for enhancing quality. Independent national bodies should be established and comparative standards of quality, recognised at international level, should be defined. Due attention should be paid to specific institutional, national and regional contexts in order to take into account diversity and to avoid uniformity. Stakeholders should be an integral part of the institutional evaluation process (p.2).

The definition offered by UNESCO (1998) indicates that quality in higher education includes the four key points: relativity, process, absolute, and culture. Firstly, being relative means that quality in higher education should be reflected in many aspects of university and its environments, as the university institution is always characterised by multiple actors and relevant stakeholders such as policy makers, managers, lecturers, researchers, students, support staff, buildings, facilities, equipment technology and other outside stakeholders (governments and employers). Secondly, quality as a process means that to achieve higher education quality, a university must undergo certain processes and conform to the procedural requirements that include the performance of these requirements or standards for each educational process, such as the “input”, “process” and “output” of the training processes. In other words,

the educational administrations must set up educational standards and means at each stage to manage them. Thirdly, “quality as absolute” suggests the expectation for the highest quality of educational products or the highest possible higher education standards. Finally, quality as culture means that it reflects the level of understanding about quality in each university where each entity is concerned and acknowledges the importance of quality in their university. These key points indicate that being amorphous and contextual are the most common features related to the conceptualisation of quality.

Currently, “fitness for purpose” is very common in many universities across both developed and developing countries like the United Kingdom, England and Australia (Williams & Cappuccini-Ansfield, 2007). For example, explaining this concept, the Australian University Quality Agency (AUQA) (2004) states that:

Fitness for purpose, where ‘purpose’ is to be interpreted broadly, to include mission, goals, objectives, specification and so on. This is an inclusive definition, as every organisation or activity has a purpose, even if it is not always precisely stated. ‘Fitness for purpose’ means both that an organisation has procedures in place that are appropriate for the specified purposes, and that there is evidence to show that these procedures are in fact achieving the special purpose (p.3).

Many of the quality definitions that are expressed in the higher education literature confirm that quality is both a multi-faceted concept and a continuum. Upon reviewing the higher education literature, it is evident that the core definition of quality is not the same for all universities (Lim, 2001).

For the purposes of this study, the definition from Materu (2007) is adopted. He defines, quality in higher education as “fitness for purpose”. This concept is significant for many educational scholars for several reasons. Firstly, it is meeting commonly agreed precepts of standards. According to Ashcroft and Foreman-Peck (1996, p. 21), standards can be defined in terms of a minimum “threshold” by which performance is judged. For instance, quality standards in higher education may be defined by law, the field or program delivered, conditions in a university, a coordinating body or professional requirements from society. For example, the perception about quality as “excellent” has been popular in most universities.

Secondly, “fitness for purpose” has a significant impact on program delivery in a university. A broad range of factors determine “fitness for purpose” in a university, including vision and goals, talent and expertise of teaching staff, admission standards, the teaching and learning environment, the employability of graduates (refer to the labour market), the quality of the library, management effectiveness, and governance and leadership. In the era of globalisation, “fitness for purpose” in higher education should also require exchanges of knowledge, interactive networking, mobility of teachers and students, and international projects, while taking account of the national cultural value and circumstances (Morley, 2003). Finally, “fitness for purpose” is the quality concept that is implemented in the two universities where the current study was undertaken. In the next section, the conceptualisations of quality assurance in higher education will be discussed.

2.2.2 Concepts of quality assurance

The literature in higher education shows that “quality assurance” like “quality”, is a concept incorporating a range of measures. For many relevant people such as casual and expert observers, parents and communities, teachers and education administrators, the adoption of quality assurance mechanisms in each higher education system depends on perceptions about quality assurance and “education quality” as defined by national examinations (Christian, 2005; Ryan, 2015; Schindler et al., 2015; Shanahan & Gerber, 2004). In each university, the role of measuring or setting up quality assurance standards is actually specified, and states what it is and what is required. Therefore, there seems to be no universally accepted conceptual framework of quality assurance for all universities. The general understandings about “quality assurance” in higher education as revealed in the literature are explored below.

Quality assurance as a direct concern for quality in higher education has developed strongly over the last twenty years. Stensaker, Brandt, and Solum (2008) argue that, over the last two decades, the issues of quality have become a major concern in higher education resulting in the establishment of quality processes and research. Most literature on quality assurance in the university sector shows that the definition of quality in higher education, as with quality assurance itself, has many perspectives depend on

the purpose and context of higher education institutions, which results in the definition of quality assurance being stated according to a variety of perspectives. Therefore, examination of the definitions of quality assurance in higher education should be based on the main strategies for formulating definitions as summarised below.

Firstly, quality assurance refers to a systematic process. An early quality assurance concept by Vroeijenstijn (1995) suggests that quality assurance is a systematic, structured and continuous attention to quality in terms of quality maintenance and improvement. Similarly, UNESCO (2004) states that quality assurance is a university's system for reviewing educational programs and promoting acceptable standards of education, scholarship and infrastructure. Quality assurance is a checking process to see whether an educational product or university service is being developed to meet special requirements or higher education standards. In this sense, quality assurance is used to maintain and improve the quality of educational outcomes. It is also intended to enable key stakeholders such as academic leaders and staff to have confidence in their quality control procedures and the standards achieved in terms of educational outputs.

Secondly, quality assurance refers to higher education policies and procedures. Mishra (2007) highlights that quality assurance is a policy system that is used to lead a university in its performance. Woodhouse (1999b) agrees with Mishra that, quality assurance in higher education refers to such policies. However, Woodhouse also strongly believes that attitudes, actions and procedures in a university are necessary for promoting maintenance and enhancement of quality assurance. In the same way, Lim (2001) underscores the point that "quality assurance" is understood to refer to all the policies, attitudes, actions and procedures directed to ensuring the maintenance and enhancement of quality. From this stance, it is easier to conceptualise quality assurance with respect to practice at both national and institutional levels through investigating the published quality assurance policies and guidelines.

Thirdly, quality assurance refers to a management tool. Harman, Stewart, Meek, and Lynn (2000) define quality assurance as the systematic management and assessment procedures adopted by a higher education institution, or the system used to monitor

performance and to promote achievement of quality outputs or improved quality. They further note that the stakeholders within a university could become confident about the management of quality assurance, and the outcomes if they are achieved. This means that quality assurance not only establishes quality assurance criteria to find out the extent to which a product or university services meet specifications, but also guarantees that the quality assurance products and services are delivered. As noted by Alexandrou (2013, p. 12), quality assurance “refers to the procedures, processes or systems used by a higher education institution to safeguard and improve the quality of its education and other activities”. Other scholars, such as Westerheijden et al. (2007, p. 26) note that “quality assurance is a plan and systematic review process of an institution or program to determine whether or not acceptable standards of education, scholarship and infrastructure are being met, maintained and enhanced”. Furthermore, Hodson and Thomas (2003, p. 20) note that the purpose of a quality assurance system in a university is to “create a ground for visibility into the processes that support the study program and into measurements of learning outcome, capabilities and competences”. From a management perspective, it is clear that the definitions of quality assurance in universities focus on particular areas, such as quality management control, processes and outputs.

Fourthly, quality assurance relates to the stakeholder’s satisfaction. Quality assurance refers to satisfaction that has been labelled as an effective tool for organisational improvement and sustainability (Cheong Cheng, 2003; Choi, Cho, Lee, Lee, & Kim, 2004; Mi Dahlgard-Park & Zink, 2007; Shanahan & Gerber, 2004). In this sense, quality assurance procedures promote accountability and/or bring about improvement (Hayward, 2006). Accountability has significance for external stakeholders and internal efforts. Stakeholders are all those who have a legitimate interest in what universities do and in the quality of their outputs; they include students and graduates, but they also include employers, parents, various professions, professional bodies and government. The satisfaction of stakeholders as an approach to maintaining quality in higher education is regarded as a useful tool for considering the organisational effectiveness and maximising the stakeholders’ benefits, because it can lead to increasing enrichment for both organisations and society (Foster & Jonker, 2005). However, it is also argued that the problems faced by any focal organisation arise

partly because its management does not meet the needs and expectations of all stakeholders (Hazlett, McAdam, Sohal, Foster, & Jonker, 2007). As a result, a stakeholder satisfaction approach to quality assurance in universities should be recognised as one of the key characteristics of quality assurance in universities.

It is noted that quality assurance is viewed as an all-embracing term covering all the policies, educational processes and action tools that are used for maintaining quality in higher education institutions. Vlăsceanu, Grünberg, and Pârlea (2007) have written that:

Quality assurance is an all-embracing term referring to an ongoing, continuous process of evaluating (assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining, and improving) the quality of a higher education system, institutions, or programs. As a regulatory mechanism, quality assurance focuses on both accountability and improvement... Quality assurance activities depend on the existence of the necessary institutional mechanisms preferably sustained by a solid quality culture. Quality management, quality enhancement, quality control, and quality assessment are means through which quality is promoted (p.74).

The definition offered by the authors above illustrates that quality assurance is a generic term that is open to many interpretations, and can refer to systems, plans and structures of a university that are used for maintaining the quality of higher educational products and services. In addition, quality assurance also means a university's guarantee or certification of particular higher education standards that are published by governments or authorised quality assurance agencies. In this sense, quality assurance can be understood as the university's responsibility to convince people outside the university of its credibility. However, in order to achieve the required stakeholder satisfaction, the quality assurance in universities should include the university's resources for promoting the successful implementation of quality assurance.

It is clear that quality and quality assurance in universities is a multi-faceted concept that which can be illuminated in different forms by different epistemological positions. Also, quality assurance is a highly complex concept and the meaning of this concept is often ambiguous. Therefore, conceptualisations of quality and quality

assurance have become an important issue in universities. Understanding the quality assurance concept in the university sector should start from different positions and within the context of each university environment. Why quality and quality assurance is significant for contemporary higher educational settings will be discussed in the next section.

2.2.3 Why worry about quality and quality assurance?

The significance of quality in contemporary universities is recognised in this study. It is evident in the literature that quality is a concept of interest for relevant stakeholders like students, their parents, tax payer financiers of universities, academic staff, academic leaders, planners and policy makers in education. There are some clear reasons for this interest.

Firstly, international academic cooperation including student and staff exchanges requires maintenance of higher quality standards (Altbach & Teichler, 2001; Chan, 2004). Academic cooperation also promotes competition between the universities not only within a nation, but also between them. To survive in such circumstances, the higher education institutions need to maintain high educational quality (Stimac & Katic, 2015).

Secondly, customer satisfaction is a significant aspect in current higher education (Choi et al., 2004; Hazlett et al., 2007). All relevant stakeholders such as students, parents and sponsoring agencies now concentrate more on getting value for their money and time. The stakeholders are now demanding or choosing a university, which provides high quality teaching, and employable skill sets relevant to the needs of the labour market (Foster & Jonker, 2005).

Thirdly, maintaining high standards is essential in most universities that is a current higher education trend (Cullen, Joyce, Hassall, & Broadbent, 2012; Ramsden, 2003). Educational institutions, their academic leaders and the staff are concerned with educational standards for each task and continuously and progressively aim to improve performance. In order to achieve these standards, they promote the quality

of professional teaching and learning as well as the educational programs and resources (Shah, Roth, & Nair, 2010).

Finally, accountability in universities has become an area of significant attention in current times (Sursock, 2011a). Every university is accountable to its stakeholders regarding funding; therefore, a university should ensure accountability for funds utilised and inform the stakeholders of appropriate decisions. In this circumstance, quality in universities can be considered a management tool to match the stakeholders' needs (Foster & Jonker, 2005). Further, excellence in teaching and learning is the responsibility of all universities. The next section describes the elements and approaches to quality assurance in universities.

2.3 Approaches to quality assurance

According to Harman and Meek (2000), there are different quality assurance system approaches that have been adopted by universities:

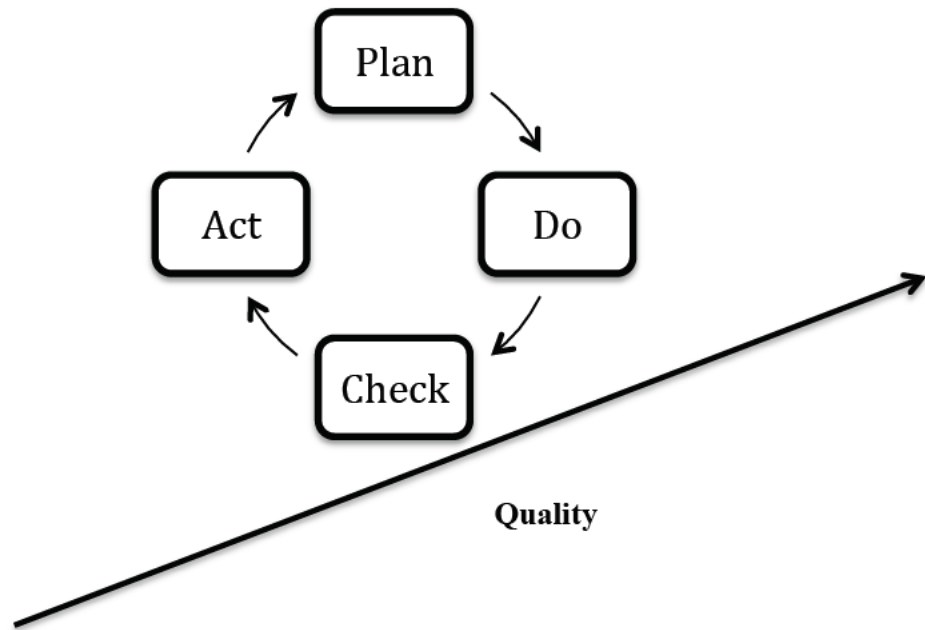
The literature reporting these developments points to tremendous variety in approaches and methods and also to a significant degree of borrowing by national systems of higher education from one another. Most quality assurance mechanisms depend on one or a combination of a limited number of methodologies, the most important of which are self-studies or self-evaluation; peer review by panels of experts; use of relevant statistical information and performance indicators; and surveys of key groups, such as students, graduates, and employers (p.16).

In the discourse on quality assurance systems in universities, there are two elements commonly used by most quality assurance systems, namely the IQA and EQA processes. Three common methods are applied in IQA and EQA processes: quality accreditation, quality audit and quality assessment. Examining the terms IQA and EQA is vital for understanding the data collection and analysis procedures used in this study. In the next sections, information on these two quality assurance elements is presented.

2.3.1 Elements of quality assurance

The discourse on quality assurance in universities refers to internal and external elements. The first element of quality assurance processes in the university is the IQA process, which is a process that focuses on the provisions and processes designed by the university institution to promote the quality of the education it provides. This process also responds to external requirements from relevant stakeholders such as government and the society. A government department of education or its agency is frequently the universities in the United States of America and other Western countries. According to El-Khawas (1998), IQA concentrates mainly on the university academic issues, lies in collecting evidence and information about mission fulfillment, efficiency of activity and ways of ensuring quality within a university. In this sense, this process covers all aspects of a university's provisions and activities to promote quality education.

UNESCO (2014c, p. 2) states that IQA in each institution are programs, policies and mechanisms for ensuring that it is fulfilling its own purposes, as well as the standards that apply to higher education in general, or to the relevant profession or discipline concerned. One can surmise that quality assurance is a primary responsibility of a university; however, governments in many countries have a special responsibility regarding quality assurance of publicly funded institutions. They can promote quality assurance model frameworks and policies in each university, but they must also be responsible for maintaining and assuring the quality of education in general. Therefore, it is very important that each university develops an efficient IQA system (Dill, 2007; Kis, 2005b; Lim, 2001). The literature in higher education shows that although there is no one-quality assurance model that can fit all cases, each university functions in ways relevant to its context. In this case, it is up to the university governance to decide what model fits best. However, from various IQA approaches applied in the universities, there are apparently some basic conditions that can be found which include elements for monitoring, evaluation and improvement. Mishra (2007) agrees that at least the IQA system should cover aspects of the dominant cycle: plan, do, check and act as in Figure 2.2.



Source: (Mishra, 2007, p. 21)

Figure 2.2: Steps for internal quality assurance in a university

The four major steps of the process are as follows: (1) Plan: gathering the data to identify and define the aspect that needs improvement and identify ways to achieve this; (2) Do: implementing the plan; (3) Check: analysing the results to see if there is good alignment between the original goals and what was actually achieved; and, (4) Act: depending on the results from the check, acting on the plan. In other words, the processes are aimed at monitoring quality assurance instruments, evaluation and activities for improvement. However, the IQA system takes account where relevant of the requirement of the legislative frameworks within which the universities operate. In this regard, the IQA process in each university may take different forms and focus at different organisational levels within a university, such as at a faculty or institute level.

The second element is the EQA process. UNESCO (2014c, p. 2) notes that this process refers to the actions of an external body, possibly a quality assurance agency which assesses the operation of the institution or its programs, to determine whether it is meeting the agreed standards. The EQA process is about being accountable to external stakeholders and is not about internal self-improvement. The EQA process

can have various forms because it takes account of various stakeholders. The purpose of the EQA process is to provide information to demonstrate the status of university quality assurance activities to relevant stakeholders. The EQA process involves universities using benchmark activities, external audits or external quality assessments. These approaches will be discussed further in Section 2.3.2.

The literature in higher education indicates that it is necessary to distinguish between IQA and EQA processes. One useful characteristic to make this distinction was suggested by Dill (2007). He distinguishes the two processes as follows: IQA refers to university policies and practices whereby the universities themselves monitor and improve the quality of education provision; whereas, EQA refers to supra-external policies and practices whereby external bodies assure the quality of higher education institutions and programs. One can surmise that the EQA process is more about accountability than the IQA process because it provides a snapshot of current quality standards on a broader scale. In contrast, the IQA process is formative in leading quality assurance towards continuous development and the creation of a quality culture in the institutions (Hayward, 2006; Materu & Righetti, 2010; Ryan, 2015). The current approaches to IQA and EQA in universities are summarised in Figure 2.3.

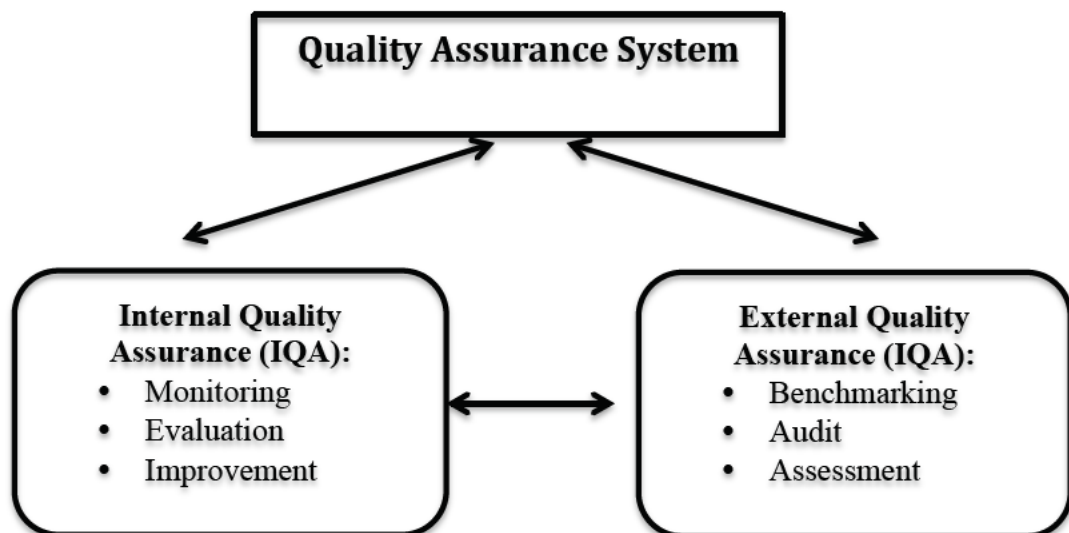


Figure 2.3: The quality assurance elements in universities

It is clear that a quality assurance system in a university must not only have internal aspects, but also external aspects. Further, quality assurance in a university is based on the university's responsibilities for their educational programs and other provisions. Therefore, the EQA process recognises and supports institutional responsibility for quality assurance. For most commentators, however, the IQA process has the greatest impact on the quality assurance processes in a university. Lenn (2004) indicates that there is more attention focused on the mission, governance, effective management, physical facilities and financial resources of the institution in the IQA process than the EQA process. It is clear that it is necessary to establish a balance between the two processes, because quality assurance needs monitoring from both IQA and EQA perspectives (Westerheijden et al., 2007). Quality assurance systems and processes can also provide linkages and networking across institutional boundaries, especially when processes of peer review are involved. However, the internal and external approaches of a quality assurance system in a university are particularly challenging. This is because existing national realities show a variety of practices that hold varied concepts about what is value in education. There is therefore no point in attempting to be conceptually pure (Martin & Stella, 2007). The quality assurance methods related to the IQA and EQA process in Figure 2.3 will be discussed further in the sections 2.3.2 and 2.5.

In summary, quality assurance in universities is a continuous process in which universities receive external feedback and follow-up processes are initiated. Although the general elements of quality assurance in universities can provide a useful framework within which to study, they cannot provide a complete quality assurance scheme. In the next section, the different approaches to quality assurance that respond to IQA and EQA requirements are further discussed.

2.3.2 Quality assurance reviews methods

Several approaches have been applied to quality assurance in universities. There are three common evaluative approaches relevant to study research questions: accreditation, assessment and quality audit. These terms are examined through definitions, approaches and relationships in the university sector.

2.3.2.1 Quality accreditation

Quality accreditation is one of the most widely used methods for establishing quality, and has recently been introduced in many universities. It can represent either a transformation of existing approaches to quality assurance in universities, or an entirely new approach. Looking back on traditional accreditation methods, quality accreditation commonly focused on inputs to the university system (Sanyal & Martin, 2007), which included self-assessment, document analysis and peer-visits. For example, Clark and Neave (1992) stated that accreditation could be defined as a control process and assurance whereby, as a result of inspection or assessment, an institution or its programs were recognised as meeting minimum acceptable standards. Harman and Meek (2000, p. 34) indicate that accreditation is a “process of assessment and review which enables a higher education course and institution to be recognised or certified as meeting appropriate standards”.

Currently, for many educators, accreditation has been used as a control tool for promoting quality improvement in universities. Quality accreditation is also used as a popular way for encouraging universities that have been judged to have attained desirable standards to do even better (Khoo, Majid, & Chaudhry, 2003). In this context, accreditation has been used against minimum current higher education quality assurance standards that are acceptable for university or allied programs. For instance, when accreditation by government authorities is required to implement educational products or programs in a university, it is normally called “licensing” and involves the assuring of a certificate given by government authorities.

Educators generally and other relevant stakeholders such as academic leaders, lecturers and employers agree with the three characteristics of quality accreditation offered by Harvey (2004): (1) accreditation is a process applied to an applicant organisation like a management tool; (2) the university institution or academic program acquires accreditation to evaluate the results of teaching and learning; and, (3) accreditation is an outcome from regulatory bodies such as the issuing of a quality certificate. The goal of accreditation is to promote the education provided by institutions of higher education in order to meet acceptable levels of quality. The interpretations of quality accreditation as a higher education standard is linked to

government published standards or authorised quality assurance agencies who examine the quality in a university through different methods. For example, Schwarz and Westerheijden (2007) claim that, methods such as self-evaluation or peer-review are used by relevant stakeholders like employers to evaluate a university or academic program as meeting threshold levels of higher education quality.

In practice, accreditation is employed to gather information about a university's status with regard to quality of teaching, learning, research and other university services. In this sense, accreditation refers to a checking process by using a list of appropriate standards. For example, accreditation as a significant concept is most often used with reference to schools and hospitals in the USA, and private organisations of regional and national scope known as non-governmental agencies perform the accreditation. They organize and conduct instructional reviews develop evaluation criteria and conduct peer evaluations to assess whether or not those criteria are met. Currently, all higher educational institutions in the USA undergo accreditation review. In Australia, accreditation in higher education refers to a process of assessment and review that enables a higher education course or institution to be recognised or certified as meeting appropriate standards. According to Lenn (2004), the term accreditation in Australian higher education has three meanings: (1) a process of review or an assessment conducted by a government agency to enable a Minister or approved authority to recognise and approve a higher education institution or course; (2) a process of review carried out by a government registration body to enable graduates of a particular courses to practice in the particular State or Territory; and, (3) a process of assessment and recognition carried out by professional associations. This study was primarily concerned with the first usage. Lenn (2004) also distinguishes the way in which accreditation is used in universities to aim at relevant stakeholders, as listed in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 indicates clearly that accreditation is about the universities responses to the demands of governmental authorities and relevant stakeholders. However, these stakeholders also require the universities to perform adequately. Stakeholders are also involved in accomplishing broader purposes including strategies for management and planning in universities.

Table 2.1: Accreditation systems for different relevant stakeholders

Users	Use
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To define national higher education; • To promote quality higher education; • To promote a quality labour force; • To determine which institutions and programs receive public funding; • To accept into civil service only those who have graduated from accredited institutions; and, • To generally use quality assurance as a means of consumer protection.
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assist in selecting an institution for study; • To promote transfer between accredited institutions; • To promote administration at the graduate level at different institution from that of the undergraduate degree; and, • To assist in funding employment.
Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assure qualified employees.
Funding organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To determine eligible institutions for funding.
Higher education institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve institutional information and data; • To enhance institutional planning; • To determine membership in certain organisations; • To facilitate transfer schemes; and, • To assure a qualified student body.

Source: (Lenn, 2004, p. 12)

In contrast to the Lenn (2004) view of accreditation, many authors believe that accreditation in a university usually serves the purposes of quality control, accountability, improving the quality of teaching, learning and research and publishing quality assurance reports. This approach is popular for all relevant stakeholders with different purposes to those shown in Table 2.1.

It should be noted that accreditation is used as an indirect indicator for maintaining the quality of education and is regularly used for differentiating academic programs and institutions in terms of quality (Tayag, 2005). Accreditation is also an appropriate tool for stimulating and accelerating a university's growth and development to achieve excellence, relevance, and effectiveness. The final goal of accreditation is to promote a university's education in terms of broadly acceptable levels of quality. In the next section, another popular approach to quality assurance in universities is presented, namely quality audit.

2.3.2.2 Quality audit

Lim (2001) argues that a quality audit can be defined as a method for checking the extent to which the university achieves its stated outcomes. In this sense, it is a process used to review an institution or the programs delivered by a university to determine if its curriculum, staff and infrastructure meet its stated aims and objectives. On the other hand, a quality audit recognises an external quality assurance process. Vlăsceanu, Grünberg, and Pârlea (2004) state:

Quality audit is the process of quality assessment by which an external body promotes that: 1) the institution or program quality assurance procedures; or 2) that the overall (internal and external) quality assurance procedures of the system are adequate and are actually being carried out. Quality audit looks to the system for achieving good quality or not at the quality itself. A quality audit can be realized only by relevant person (i.e. quality auditors) who are not directly involved in the areas being audited. Quality audits can be undertaken to meet internal goals (internal audit) or external goals (external audit). The result of the audit must be documented through an audit report (p. 5).

Thus, an effective quality management system should assess internal and external criteria on a regular basis, with the audit covering both the quality process and the quality level of the standards achieved. It is also an evaluation of an institution or its programs in relation to its own mission, goals and stated standards (Morley, 2003).

Recent developments in quality audit structures and their relationships to practice in higher education tend to focus on the features of a quality audit. According to Ullah, Ajmal, and Rahman (2011), the main features are:

- They operate at the institutional, rather than course/program, level.
- They are concerned with processes, procedures and their operations.
- They are not concerned with any assessment or evaluation of the objectives or with the appropriateness of the outcomes.

The main features of a quality audit indicate that it is used by external bodies to control the quality assurance processes and promote effective implementation. The results of university quality audits help to answer the questions about the effectiveness of the processes in achieving the university's objectives (Nightingale & O'Neil, 2012). Therefore, a quality audit is commonly used as part of national quality assurance systems.

2.3.2.3 Quality assessment

Quality assessment is an evaluation method that makes graded judgments about quality assurance in higher education. The assessment will ask “how good is your output?” and the output of an assessment is a qualitative evaluation that is a grade (Nicholson, 2011). The focus of the assessment is the attainment of desired outcomes through “benchmarking” (Woodhouse, 1999a). Benchmarking is a system that provides self-evaluation quality assurance and self-improvement processes in an institution, and is then compared with other similar institutions. Recognising quality assurance as an external quality assurance process, Vlăsceanu et al. (2004) indicates that:

Quality assessment indicates the actual process of external evaluation (reviewing, measuring, judging) of the quality of higher education institutions and programs. It consists of those techniques, mechanisms and activities that are carried out by an external body in order to evaluate the quality of the higher education processes, practices, programs and services. Some aspects are important when defining and operating with the concept of quality assessment: (1) the context (national, institutional), (2) the methods (self-assessment, assessment by peer review, site visits), (3) the levels (system, institution, department, individual), (4) the mechanisms (rewards, policies, structures, cultures) and (5) certain quality values attached to quality assessment, such as academic values (focusing upon the subject field), managerial values (focusing on staff and their teaching skills

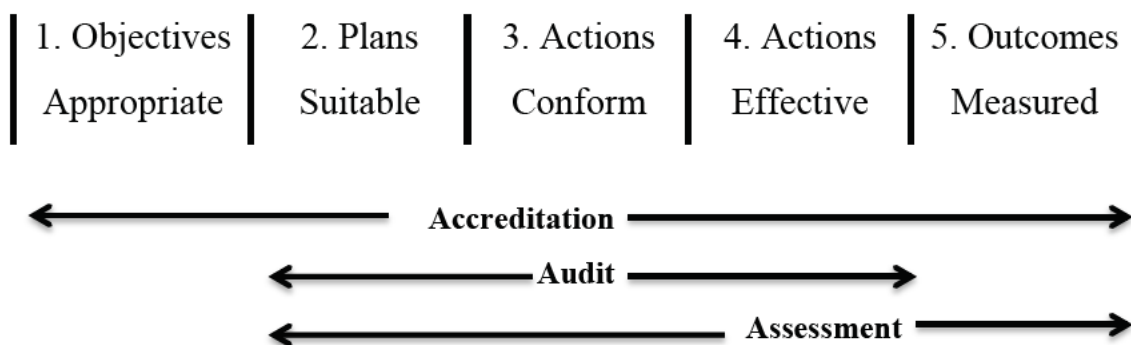
and classroom practice), employment values (emphasizing graduate output characteristics and e-learning outcomes) (p.28).

It is clear that quality assessment initiatives have focused more on the outcomes of educational experiences and those institutional processes that contribute to desired outcomes. The description of quality assessment is conceptually close to the current quality assurance processes found in the university sector, as the purpose of assessment is to gather information, qualify status and use the information with a view to judging the instructional effectiveness and the curricular adequacy of a university as a whole (institutional assessment).

In practice, the literature in higher education show that quality assessment focuses on the evaluation of the scoring approaches of the universities by using qualitative and quantitative methods to collect evidence of educational activities. Quality assessment is a first and necessary step to validate a formal accreditation decision, although it does not necessarily lead to an accreditation outcome. Therefore, for assessment purposes, the university should design a technical process to evaluate their student's learning outcomes, improve student's learning and maintain teaching effectiveness.

As well as the three main current approaches, many quality assurance systems employ an external examiner of quality in the university or use licensing, certification, surveys of student learning experiences and graduate employment in efforts to understand the status of student knowledge, abilities and skills in their universities.

In summary, although accreditation, assessment and audit can be recognised as three distinct concepts and processes, they may coincide, merge or mingle in actual quality assurance processes, and “any attempt to make a precise definition is further confused by the fact that most of these terms are also used generically to refer to any review or evaluation process” (Woodhouse, 1999, pp. 33-34). As can be seen in Figure 2.4, five points that demonstrate conceptual relationships clarify these concepts.



Source: Woodhouse (1999b, p. 7)

Figure 2.4: Five points demonstrating conceptual relationships between accreditation, assessment and audit

In the next section, quality assurance as practices and common regular quality assurance methods are outlined and discussed.

2.4 Quality assurance practices and methods

This section explores quality assurance as practice and describes common methods used for gathering information on quality assurance at the university level.

2.4.1 Practice of quality assurance

A formal quality assurance system in a university is intended to improve educational quality and efficiency (ASEAN Secretariat, 2016; Haris, 2013; Hodson & Thomas, 2003; Mishra, 2007). The literature and current research show that quality assurance practices in universities focus on description and review of actual university educational programs. These activities are fundamental to each university's mission. Several key characteristics of the implementation of quality assurance in universities can be summarised as follows.

Firstly, in a general sense, quality assurance is a genuine opportunity for the universities. Each university is required to address the quality assurance system that

has been published and mandated by government. The quality assurance system offers universities opportunities to demonstrate relevance to stakeholders about their achievements in relation to current higher education standards. In practice, there are a variety of relevant stakeholders involved in the quality assurance process, such as students, parents, employers, government and even the academic community itself who want to know about the genuine quality of their university. Quality assurance provides institutions with the opportunity to demonstrate that issues of quality are being systematically and conscientiously addressed and improved (Wilger, 1997).

A current statement of the mission, vision and quality assurance strategy in a university shows that quality practices in higher education relate to what each university is planning to achieve (Lim, 2001; Nicholson, 2011; Nightingale & O'Neil, 2012). Such statements are designed for quality assurance in the university and often include quality assurance of teaching, learning and research. For example, Westerheijden et al. (2007) note that quality practice in a university is often mentioned in the mission statement of the organisation, and specifies what the university is aiming to achieve. In this sense, quality assurance is effectively linked to essential strategic planning in teaching, learning and research.

Secondly, quality assurance in practice is necessary from both EQA and IQA perspectives. With regard to the IQA process, universities have designed effective reviews of their quality assurance mechanism that includes a systematic investigation to identify the university's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) related to various existing procedures. With regard to the EQA reviews, Morley (2003) notes that the quality assurance process reflects the interests of the wider society. In this view, the universities should be aware of the quality expectations of their relevant environments, such as government policies and employers, or professional bodies and industries. For instance, these expectations of society also suggest the universities are increasingly relying on external examiners for advice and critiques on a variety of issues in their educational programs in relation to quality assurance processes, such as course design, approval, teaching and learning evaluation and university policy development. Both the EQA and IQA processes assist the university to ameliorate their weaknesses and promote quality education.

In terms of the requirements of both the EQA and IQA processes, the literature in higher education shows that most universities have developed their own approaches to quality assurance during a period of intensive quality assurance activity. The main characteristics of the quality assurance approaches follow three steps: (1) setting the university's mission; (2) designing quality assurance review methods; and, (3) establishing quality assurance standards (Freeman, 1994). On the other hand, Lim (2001, p. 26) notes that the quality assurance approaches in universities should involve more steps. He suggests the following five steps:

- Define the mission and goals of the university.
- Identify the functions that implement the goal of the university, and the range; and relative importance in the implementation of the mission.
- Define the objectives of each of the functional and performance indicators and set qualitative and quantitative outcomes for each.
- Establish a management system to promote the quality, and management for these goals and how they will be achieved.
- Establish a quality system to evaluate the university's performance of these functions and determine the areas where improvement is needed.

In Lim's (2001) view, these proposed steps are related to how a system of quality assurance in a university is established, and necessitates being audited by external and internal bodies. However, in considering the impact of different quality assurance systems and mechanisms in the universities, there are different stakeholders involved in the university quality assurance processes, such as governments, policy makers, parents, academic leaders, academic staff and students. The literature in higher education quality assurance shows that as well as the impact of relevant stakeholders, there are also a host of contextual factors to take into account before an attempt at any conclusion can be made about the impacts of different quality assurance processes (Lim, 2001; Materu, 2007; Middlehurst, 2013). In the next section, the quality assurance methods are presented.

2.4.2 Quality assurance review methods

Two common basic methods have been used in most quality assurance processes in higher education systems: self-evaluation/self-review/self-study/self-accreditation (this approach is called self-evaluation) and peer-review and/or external-review (this approach is called peer-review). These characterise the quality assurance review methods and are discussed below.

2.4.2.1 Self-evaluation

Consideration of the self-evaluation methods indicates that it is a common first step in quality assurance evaluation procedures. Generally, self-evaluation refers to the study of institutional processes and practices by members of the respective institution (Kis, 2005b). According to Becket and Brookes (2005):

Self-evaluation works on monitoring, evaluating and enhancing internal procedures of university education through the assessment of teaching and student's learning, course of program design, approval, review, peer-review and external examine system. As a mode of quality evaluation, it is more consistent with the collegial tradition and culture of a academy (pp. 5-6).

Self-evaluation has many significant roles in quality assurance. One of the most significant functions of self-evaluation is to encourage universities to measure themselves and create a framework for building up the quality assurance definition in their respective institution. For instance, self-evaluation helps each university to check to what extent it is achieving its strategic mission and goals, and allows the university to prepare an action plan for future development. Finally, self-evaluation is carried out by many universities, though its nature varies significantly (Croxford, Grek, & Shaik, 2009).

In practice, self-evaluation is the ongoing process through which the university institution evaluates its' own quality assurance performance, identifies strengths and areas for improvement, and makes the necessary improvements overtime to achieve better educational outcomes. Harman and Meek (2000, p. 5) explain that, "good management practice requires that all universities should have in place appropriate

internal quality assurance and improvement plans, and submission of these to some outside body provides useful discipline for institutions to keep plans up to date”. In addition, a self-evaluation report is a final accreditation step because it helps to reveal any deficiencies and also exposes the areas that will require immediate attention for improvement. In short, self-evaluation builds capacity for the collection, analysis and interpretation of information for such procedures (Brennan & Shah, 2000b).

2.4.2.2 Peer-review

Peer-review is the second quality assurance method in the universities and is conducted by external quality assurance experts and colleagues in higher education. Frederiks, Westerheijden, and Weusthof (1994) noted that peer-review is an evaluation method carried out by another academic or academics, usually in the same discipline. Traditionally, peer-review commonly involves the constitution of a peer panel that mostly comprises experienced academics in the field to be reviewed who would visit the institution to undertake the evaluation. In recent practice, this process is conducted by external professionals who make judgments or decide about proposals for new programs, continuation or modification of existing academic programs, quality of the research program or the whole quality of university.

Peer-review is commonly used to holistically map the picture of the program and check the self-evaluation report by observation and interview in the university setting. Furthermore, it can be conducted on any aspect of quality assurance, and can include formal and informal evaluation of areas such as a course, program, lecturer, laboratory, teaching and learning materials and other resources.

In practice, there are two types of peer-review commonly used in universities: formative and summative (Mishra, 2007; Sanyal & Martin, 2007). Formative reviews focus on gaining information for the purposes of the quality assurance standards. In addition, this method may be confined to a specific focus such as one aspect of the quality assurance criteria. In contrast, summative reviews mainly focus on the evidence of quality in support of processes such as university promotions or whole - program evaluations. There are mutable methods for gathering information used in

peer-review that include interviews, large group meetings, reading documents and university observation.

In conclusion, it seems correct to state that there are various forms and methods of quality assurance that have been adopted in the university sector. Based on a variety of perspectives, academic leaders, staff, external stakeholders and current quality assurance practices in universities, Table 2.2 provides a summary of quality assurance practice in universities. Developed by Brennan (2012), this table is an exhaustive statement on quality assurance practices in universities and it shows that quality assurance practices in universities use different purposes and methods to monitor and promote quality education. It also indicates that with regard to the characteristics and the contexts of each university, the quality assurance purposes, scope, methods and criteria are used in a variety of forms in each university and even in different countries given different political/cultural settings. In the next section, the factors that may promote the success of quality assurance practice in universities are outlined.

Table 2.2: Quality assurance practice list in universities

<p>The nature of the quality assurance process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • peer-review. • self-evaluation. • performance indicators. • consumer satisfaction. • procedural compliance. 	<p>Where the power lies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • subject-based academics. • quality assurance professionals. • academic managers. • students/consumers-all of whom may be internal or external to the institution.
<p>The focus of the quality assurance process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teaching-curriculum, learning outcomes, pedagogies. • research-outputs, impact, relevance • research and teaching in combination. • quality assurance systems and procedures. • resources and management. 	<p>The formal aim of the quality assurance exercise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote minimum standards. • give impetus and support for quality improvement. • provide market information. • justify public funding.
<p>The level of analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • institution. • faculty/department subject. • course. 	<p>The method(s) employed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collection of survey data-students, graduates, employers. • input and output statistics admissions, drop-out, results. • employment. • peer - review visits and evaluations by external academics. • research outputs publications, citations. • procedural checks codes of practice and so on.

Source: Brennan (2012, p. 42)

2.5 The factors affecting quality assurance implementation in the university

Much of the literature about quality assurance in higher education claims that there are variety of factors that lead to quality assurance implementation in universities. However, with regard to the aim of this study, I will focus mainly on five factors: quality assurance policies; university academic leaders and staff ways of thinking about quality assurance; contextual factors; university capacities and actual quality assurance practices. The five factors are described as follows.

Quality assurance policies: Quality assurance policies at both national and institutional levels play an important role in the quality assurance implementation in the university. According to Westerheijden et al. (2007), each university should have clear policies and associated procedures for their quality assurance system that focuses on the quality and standards of their programs and awards. In this sense, it is argued that to achieve the purposes of quality assurance, the university must commit itself explicitly to the development of a quality culture and quality awareness. For instance, the university should develop and implement a quality assurance strategy for maintaining the quality of teaching, learning, research and other aspects. The policies and structures for quality assurance should clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of all participants. The policies and procedures within the university should show current status and be publicly available. In other words, each university should build its own quality assurance policies. Therefore, it is very difficult to expect successful quality assurance implementation without also ensuring the availability of adequate quality assurance policies.

University academic leaders and staff ways of thinking about quality assurance: It is important to firstly clarify understandings of quality assurance among with participants, as such the academic leaders and staff from a university because the perceptions of quality assurance have a potential impact on quality assurance policy developments and practices which impact implementation (Giertz, 2000). According to Harvey and Williams (2010), one reason for the failure of quality assurance is the inconsistency of perceptions of academics in their everyday work concerning quality assurance processes. Thus, greater attention needs to be paid to exploring the internal

stakeholder's perceptions of quality in order to minimize the potential challenges during implementation.

Contextual factors: Contextual factors have significantly affected the delivery of quality assurance in universities. For many people, policy makers, educators, academic leaders and staff, the differences in quality assurance systems among universities may be partly ascribed to contextual factors. Firstly, one of the most significant factors impacting on the successful implementation of quality assurance is the availability and support of national quality assurance agencies. National agencies should provide quality assurance methodologies, methods, standards, and quality assurance models for their universities. Such guidelines from national quality assurance agencies are not necessarily integral and available to all quality assurance systems within a nation. If they are not, the quality assurance function will not be completely fulfilled (Martin & Stella, 2007).

Secondly, university autonomy and academic freedom are highly significant and considered integral characteristics of a university. Sursock (2011b) indicates that university autonomy is one of the key factors in the capacity of institutions to define quality and the purposes of their internal quality assurance processes and thus develop quality monitoring of their activities in a meaningful way. Middlehurst (2013) also suggests that if university autonomy is a given, it can effectively contribute to the professionalisation of university leadership and management. More specifically, Hayden and Thiep (2007) elaborated six specific freedoms associated with a university's autonomy: (1) freedom to be self-governing; (2) freedom to exercise corporate financial control; (3) freedom to make their own staffing decisions; (4) freedom to select their own students; (5) freedom to decide on their own curriculum; and, (6) freedom to assess and certify the academic performance of their own students. At the university level, academic freedom refers to autonomy that ensures academic staff rights, which can be perceived by teachers and students and manifest in their autonomous activities. In actuality, a university practices and various types of academic freedom and autonomy is closely interrelated and interdependent. According to Kerr and Mapanje (2002), academic freedom is determined by the availability of the means for its conduct and no specific goals are set. However, these types of autonomy can be influenced by a number of factors,

such as the government and state structure, educational legislation funding and characteristics of the learning environment. On the other hand, the desire and readiness of teachers and students to act autonomously constitute internal factors that play a significant role in promoting quality in a university. Therefore, lecturer autonomy can be considered an important factor because it not only enables a lecturer to act autonomously, but it can also stimulate in turn the development of autonomy for learners in particular and the whole university in general, and has a wider follow-on to society at large.

Finally, quality assurance physical resources and student support are other essential factors. Current research shows among the critical success factors in a university includes a range of resources to assist student learning and teaching, such as libraries, study welfare facilities and IT infrastructure, plus human support in the form of tutors, counsellors and other advisers. The role of support services is of particular importance in facilitating the mobility of students within and across higher education systems.

University capacities: University capacity is a factor cited as critical to the successful implementation of a quality assurance system in universities (OECD, 2012). There are a number of essential university capacities required for successful quality assurance implementation. In this study, two main capacities were identified: quality of academic leaders and quality of staff. Firstly, the quality of academic leaders and staff is an essential factor in the successful implementation of quality assurance. Current research shows that the success of quality assurance is particularly demanding of human capacity (Lim, 2001; Ullah et al., 2011). Also, Materu (2007) agrees that the implementation of quality assurance relies on the quality, dedication and integrity of the people who serve as peer-reviewers, and the administrators and faculty members who prepare and/or conduct self-evaluations. This suggests that the effectiveness of quality assurance in a university depends largely on the availability of the highly qualified experienced and diligent academic staff and academic leaders in a university. With regard to the roles of academic leaders at the university, Sursock (2011a) considers that academic leaders are essential for providing a university with the initial steering and the broad

frameworks for quality assurance mechanisms. The quality of academic staff focuses on their specific knowledge, skills, sensitivities and techniques, rather than broadly on the courses they teach. The lecturers' roles are essential in creating a high-quality student experience and enabling the student to acquire knowledge, competencies and skills (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Therefore, it is necessary that lecturers participate in training programs that include pre-service training programs, in-service training, seminars, conferences and workshops to improve their knowledge and skills. In addition, the quality of students also plays an important role in enhancing quality assurance in the university through providing feedback on their experiences in every course or unit. The university must facilitate internal debate to potentially trigger intrinsic motivations to implement internal quality assurance and to ensure that such processes are not loosely added, but are integral to course planning. It is a crucial that institutional leadership formulates, discusses and communicates clear priorities and guidelines and is inclusive in the overall institutional policies plan. Ullah et al. (2011) also note the professional work of national quality assurance agencies, which must have experts in their fields with the personal skills and diplomacy necessary to conduct site visits.

Actual quality assurance practices: Ensuring quality teaching, learning and research are central to the implementation of quality assurance in a university (Kis, 2005b; Nicholson, 2011; Nightingale & O'Neil, 2012). The elements of quality assurance in teaching and learning suggested in this study include a focus on the development of curriculum, the teaching and learning review processes, and learning assessment. Firstly, curriculum development is a process that takes place through planning, approval, assessment, implementation and review. According to Bates and Poole (2003), the success of curriculum development is dependent on the quality of academics as well as experience-based, technological and pragmatic approaches. In addition, curriculum design should meet the objectives set, including the extended learning outcomes. This becomes evident in the qualifications resulting from a program. In this sense, the curriculum design should be clearly specified and be communicated in reference to the relevant level of professional national qualifications framework for higher education and respond to matching international standards. The purpose of curriculum design is also about developing appropriate curricula for

students by setting academic procedures and standards to promote student achievement at the highest learning levels. To achieve the required design of programs, the specific character of students and the teaching and learning resources are core requirements. For instance, Ullah et al. (2011) indicate that the quality of curricula in universities is essential to quality assurance development because curricula reflects the demands of society. Universities should adopt innovative teaching methods to actively engaged students in developing knowledge and skills. Staff should extend greater flexibility in teaching and learning such as the adoption of IT and other technology.

Academic program developments and reviews are another essential factor for successful implementation of quality assurance. Current literature in higher education shows that academics must be engaged to enhance the quality assurance of teaching and learning, and the design of academic programs in universities should change to meet the demands of society (Houston, 2008; OECD, 2012; Ramsden, 2003). It is recognised that the improvement of quality in teaching and learning through self-evaluation, student feedback and stakeholders' feedback from outside a university are the most typical way to achieve teaching, learning and program goals (Shanahan & Gerber, 2004).

Secondly, learning assessment methods are essential for promoting quality assurance of teaching and learning. Learning assessment is integral to the teaching and learning process. The purpose of assessment is to determine the extent to which the curriculum has impacted on the student efforts and achievements (Brookhart, 2001). In this context, assessment is used as a common tool to inform students and academic staff about the achievement of learning outcomes. It also motivates students to assess their own learning and growth. Another purpose of learning assessment is diagnosing students' strengths and weaknesses, evaluating learning effectiveness and reporting on students' progress to relevant stakeholders such as their parents and scholarship providers. In sum, assessment can be understood as a check of student learning, review of teaching practice, evaluation of teaching and learning and a part of IQA and self-review.

2.5 Conceptual framework of the study

In this study, the aim was to explore the understandings of current quality assurance systems in the two university case studies with regard to the quality assurance policies and practices. The understandings of quality assurance in a university cannot ignore various relevant factors. Based on the foregoing discussion of quality assurance in universities, the conceptual framework comprises five dimensions: quality assurance policies, university academic leaders and staff ways of thinking about quality assurance, contextual factors, university capacities and actual quality assurance practices. The perceptions of the university academic leaders and staff were focused on five main categories in order to address the six research questions. The schematic diagram of the study's conceptual framework is portrayed in Figure 2.5.

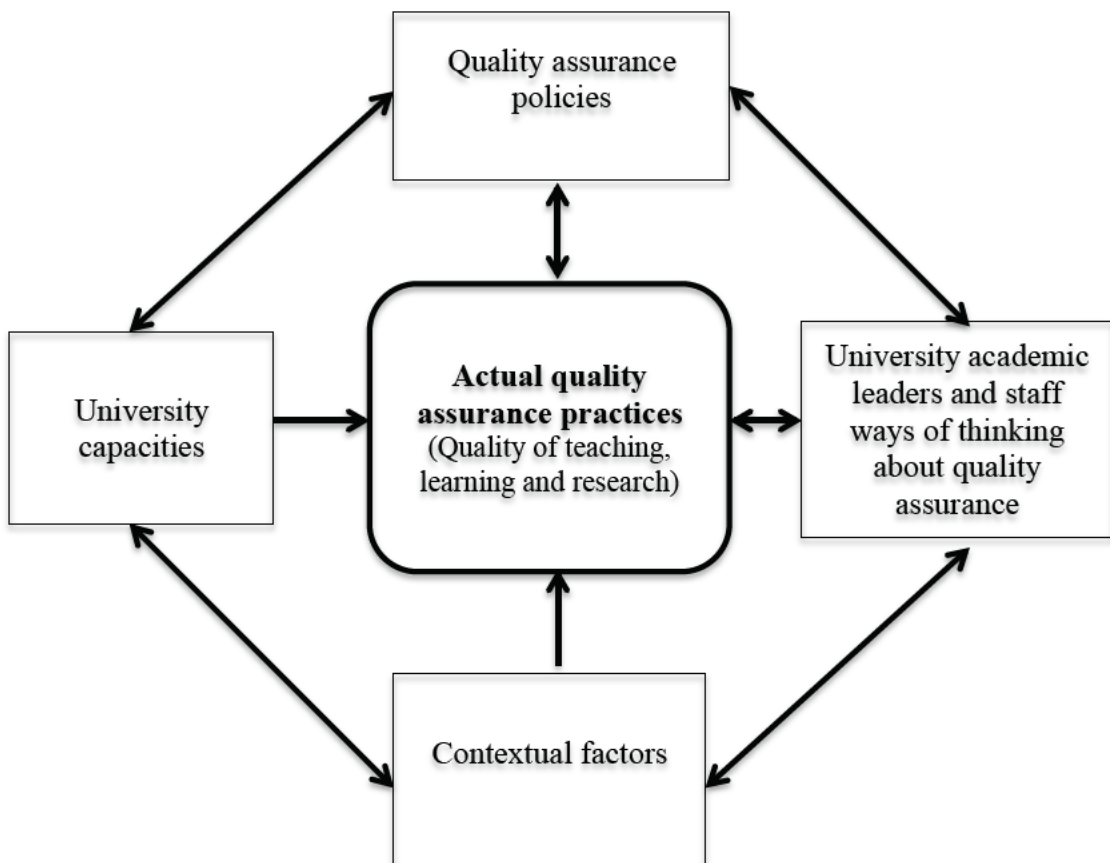


Figure 2.5: Conceptual framework of the study

The arrows in Figure 2.5 depict the flow of influence. The bidirectional arrows indicate the relative strength of the influence among the variables, while the

directional arrows show whether there is a link between the quality assurance policies and the actual quality assurance practices. Also, the links between actual quality assurance practices and good quality assurance practices in the quality assurance system are depicted.

The Figure 2.5 clearly shows that most quality assurance implementation in universities is embedded in policies. The quality assurance policies indicate the standards and procedures for quality assurance implementation in each university. Therefore, quality assurance policies have a profound affected on how academic leaders and staff in university institutions understand, accept and implement quality assurance in their university. However, the contextual factors and university capacities are also critical factors to ensure effective quality assurance implementation in each university. According to Newton (2000), at the university level, quality assurance is understood relative to how actors construe and construct 'quality' and the 'quality system'. Thus, situational factors relating to the organizational context, work environment, and actors' subjectivities prevent accountability and improvement from being reconciled and undermine the implementation of a preferred policy. Therefore, the five dimensions of the conceptual framework in Figure 2.5 were investigated in each case study and similarities and differences for comparative analysis were sought. The conceptual framework is also meant to guide understanding of the various aspects of this study as discussed in the following chapters. These quality assurance aspects are explored through my experiences, the literature and interactions with academic leaders and staff in the two university case studies in order to understand and draw an appropriate quality assurance model for each case study.

2.6 Summary

Quality and quality assurance in universities have become critical issues in universities, and various attempts have been made to enhance quality assurance in universities. This review of the literature indicates that there is no universally accepted conceptualisation of quality and quality assurance for all universities. There is also a variety of literature and research on university quality and quality assurance

in developed countries; however, there is a dearth of literature for developing countries in general and on case studies in particular. This review has also shown that there are two quality assurance processes, namely IQA and EQA. Both processes play a significant role in maintaining quality assurance in universities. In order to achieve quality assurance in universities, there are three main approaches: quality accreditation, quality audit and assessment. The common feature of these approaches is the monitoring of quality assurance processes at both institutional and national levels, and the assurance of improvements within each university. Although there are commonalities in quality assurance practice and similar models have been accepted in many countries, it is very important to consider the relevant context for understanding quality assurance practice in each university and society.

This study compares the quality assurance systems and the perceptions about quality assurance approaches of academic leaders and staff in two universities, one in Vietnam and one in Australia. The intent is to facilitate their voices about quality assurance characteristics in their work contexts. The literature about the university sector has revealed that no research or study has been conducted to compare quality assurance systems between Vietnam and Australia. Therefore, this study is important as it seeks both academic leaders and staff in different quality assurance systems to establish their professional opinions and views about the current situation of the two universities concerned. The findings of this study about current quality assurance approaches in universities seeks to fill the literature gap evident from previous research.

In the next chapter, research methodology and design will be provided.

Chapter 3 Research methodology and design

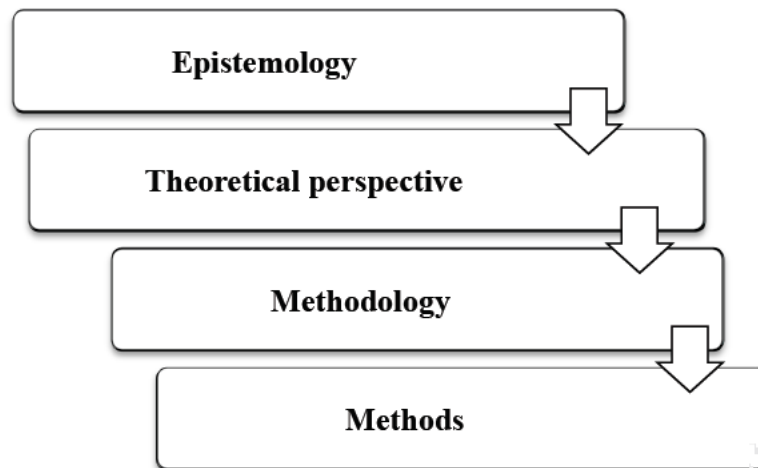
3.1 Introduction

As stated in the research questions in Chapter 1, this study investigates the perceptions of academic leaders and staff about the quality assurance systems in the two university case study sites. In this chapter, I explain why and how a comparative case study design and a mixed methods methodology were used to ascertain academic leader and staff experiences, insights and perspectives on quality assurance policies and practices.

This chapter consists of eight sections and begins with the theoretical framework that guided the research in Section 3.2. The methodological approach is discussed in Section 3.3 and methods of data collection and procedures are discussed in Section 3.4. Initial pilot testing of the methods is presented in Section 3.5. In the next section I consider the selection of case studies, participants and data collection procedures. The data analysis is presented in Section 3.7. Lastly, ethical issues and considerations are outlined in Section 3.8 and concluding remarks in Section 3.9.

3.2 Epistemology of the study

The epistemologies relevant to this research shows that there are many choices or designs for such educational research. The choice of the epistemology depends on the researcher's goals and the purposes that guide qualitative and/or quantitative research in education. In addition, in educational research, the researcher may want to describe behaviors, understand beliefs or explain educational phenomena. In order to do that, the researcher should follow one or more epistemologies. The epistemology adopted in this study is drawn from the social research framework developed by Crotty (1998, p. 4). The elements of the framework are presented in Figure 3.1.



Source: Crotty (1998, p. 4).

Figure 3.1: Epistemology of the study

Crotty (1998) suggests that four major questions must be considered to guide a social research design: (1) What epistemology-theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective-informs the research? (2) What theoretical perspective-philosophical stance-lies behind the methodology in question? (3) What methodology-strategy or plan of action that links methods to outcomes-governs the choice and use of methods? (4) What methods-techniques and procedures-are proposed to be used? He also notes that socially constructed phenomena mean different things to different people and the researcher invites the concepts of importance in the study to emerge as constructed by the participants.

This research follows Crotty's theoretical framework and utilises an epistemology of social constructionism. There are two important views that should be considered. Crotty (1998, p. 43) firstly explains the constructionist view as meanings constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting. Secondly, he also notes that different people may construct meanings in different ways, even iterations of the same phenomenon. I accept Crotty's (1998) view that:

All knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being contracted in and out of the interaction between human being and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context (p. 42).

Extending the epistemology of Crotty (1998), Denscombe (2003) describes people as creative interpreters of events who, through their actions and interpretations, literally make sense of their works. The individual can understand the world in which they live and work. As noted by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000, p. 22), “Individuals behavior can only be understood by the researcher sharing their frame of reference: understanding of individuals’ understanding of the world around them has to come from the inside, not the outside”.

According to Creswell (2012, p. 8), “Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences”. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas. Therefore, the researcher conducts research mostly by interacting with respondents and understanding the world based on respondents’ experiences.

The epistemology in social research also focuses on the relationship of the researcher to that being researched. According to Lichtman (2012) epistemology is the study of the nature of knowledge or how we know what we know, which means that the researcher should be interacting with what is being studied and interactions with research participants seem to be the most meaningful process in social sciences research (Silverman, 2014). In terms of the theoretical perspective here, this relationship between the research and that being researched lies behind the methodology. Crotty (1998) notes that the theoretical perspective provides a context for the process involved and a basis for its logic and criteria.

This study is exploratory quality assurance in diverse universities occurs in social contexts, and it is open to varied interpretations and conclusions. The participants described quality assurance from their different perspectives and experiences in their universities at the time of data collection in 2015. As a researcher, my task was to delineate, draw findings and analyse conclusions about quality assurance in each university from the perspectives provided by the academic leaders and academic staff. The research design adopted was a multiple-case study approach with mixed methods to explore in-depth the social contexts influencing quality assurance in each university case study, unpack key participant perceptions of quality assurance and potentially inform quality assurance in each university. The main data collection

methods used were both qualitative and quantitative. The use of both qualitative and quantitative data supported analysis of statistics to determine participant's responses to quality assurance phenomenon and evaluation of the variables influencing quality assurance in each university. The methodological approaches are presented in detail in the next section.

3.3 Methodological approaches

Methodology refers to the nature of the research design and the methods used. This implies that it provides the guide for the researcher to gain knowledge about the world, and instructs the researcher in the ways that the research is constructed and conducted (Sikes, 2005). In this sense, research methodology is a vital part of any research because it reflects upon, evaluates and justifies the methods used in the research study (Wellington, 2003).

The literature in research methodology also shows that each research methodology approach has its strengths and weaknesses and over-reliance on any one method is not appreciated (Punch, 2005). Therefore, it was necessary to determine the most appropriate methodologies for the current research. The choice of research methodology for each research study relies on the researcher's philosophical and fundamental assumptions concerning the social reality, -or ontological assumptions, and the nature of knowledge, or epistemological assumptions. It also relies on the human nature and agency, or assumptions about the interactions between human beings and their environment (Sikes, 2005). The best methodology and method employed in a research project relies on seeking answers to the research questions. In this study, a mixed methods approach with comparative case studies was chosen to respond to the research questions. The next section describes and explains why these were the appropriate methodologies for this study.

3.3.1 Rationale for a comparative case study design

The aim of a comparative research methodology is to compare and contrast the approaches of nations, cultures, societies, and institutions (Ragin, 2014). More specifically, the aims of comparative research often are to develop concepts or

generalisations that are based on identifying similarities and differences among those being compared (Bray, Adamson, & Mason, 2007). For instance, the characteristic ways of thinking and acting in comparative research rely on the intrinsic elements of their social structures, which means that the attitudes, values, and ideologies of enhancing one's understanding and awareness are based on other social entities. In this way, a comparative research study can deepen understanding of a social phenomenon in different contexts.

In this study, I utilised the comparative case studies approach because of the potentially contrasting quality assurance approaches and contexts in the two universities being investigated. A case study methodology invites investigation of single or collective cases (Stake, 1995). Accordingly, Creswell (2013, p. 97) notes that "The case study method explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information... and reports a case description and case themes". Goodrick (2014, p. 1) states that "Comparative case studies cover two or more cases in a way that procedures more generalisable knowledge about casual questions how and why particular programs or policies work or fail to work". He also notes that comparative case studies involve the analysis and synthesis of the similarities, differences and patterns across two or more cases that share a common focus or goal. For instance, comparative case studies often combine both qualitative and quantitative data to generate a better understanding of the cases and contexts. Searching the literature about different types of case studies, Baxter and Jack (2008) divide case study into six types: explanatory, exploratory, multiple-case studies, intrinsic, instrumental and collective. The aim of choosing a particular type of case study is to better illustrate a more detailed picture of the corporate brand in each case in a way that generalizations and statistics typically cannot reveal (Yin, 2014).

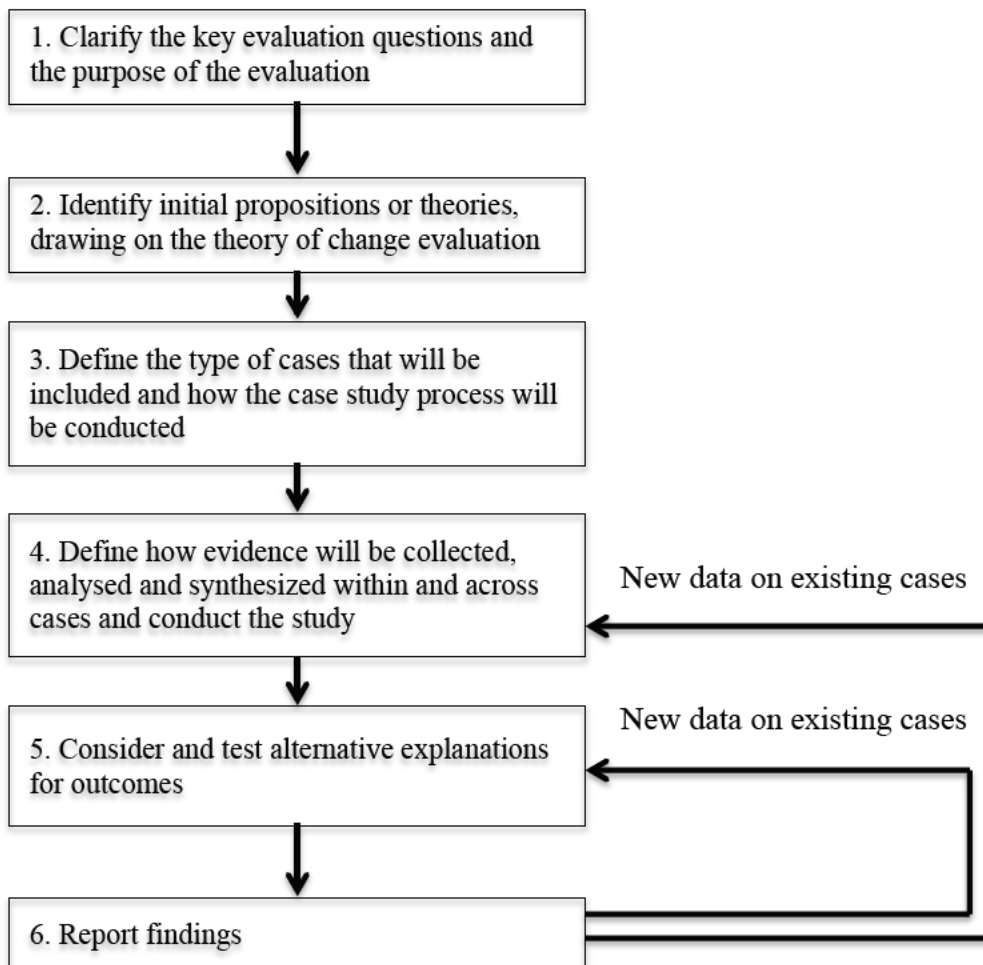
This research used a multiple case studies approach for these reasons. Firstly, case studies were chosen because of the contextual nature of the phenomenon I was investigating. As Yin (1994, p. 31) notes that "The major rationale for using case study is when the researcher's investigation must cover both a particular phenomenon and the context within which the phenomenon is occurring". Therefore,

a case study allows for cross-comparison of both contexts influencing quality assurance within the chosen region and participants' views. Secondly, comparative case studies were used in this research because the aims of this study were to explore quality assurance in each university to establish how quality assurance in each university had developed and operated within the specific contexts. This main concern was to investigate in-depth the effects and relationships between the two contexts and quality assurance policies and practices. Thus, each case study here is of specific value to understanding the quality assurance phenomenon in the university sector. Since I had particular interests in understanding the dynamics shaping quality assurance systems within the developed countries and developing countries, the use of a case study in both country contexts was considered the most appropriate approach. Case studies also invite interpretation from varied perspectives, specifically academic leaders' and academic staff in this study. Varied perspectives on the socially-constructed nature of reality stress how social experience is constructed and given meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Furthermore, case studies are also related to social constructionism that is premised on the belief of knowledge as an interactive, dynamic process influenced by the historical, social and cultural ethos (Eisner & Peshkin, 1990). These points provided a strong rationale for applying a qualitative case study methodology to explore the participants' subjective experiences from their own perspectives.

In this study, the comparative cases study design involved six steps that were borrowed from Goodrick (2014) (see Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2 illustrates how to conduct comparative case studies as implemented in this study. In the first step, a broad description of the similarities and differences in quality assurance policies between the cases was generated. Then, how analysis of quality assurance produces quality assurance policies and plus documents in each case study were identified and/or tested from certain explanatory positions as to how and why quality assurance system implementation occurred in the particular university's contexts. The second step was to explain how quality assurance was understood to contribute to a chain of results that produced the intended impacts and

to identify the various properties and dimensions of each case study. These next steps (3-6) are further discussed in sections: 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6.



Source: Goodrick (2014, p. 3)

Figure 3.2: The logic of comparative cases studies

There are several strengths and weaknesses in multiple case studies that should be considered in educational research. The literature on the strengths of case study methodology shows that it is an inclusive approach to mixed methods in which individuals, groups, institutions or other social units are investigated. The literature on both qualitative and quantitative inquiry also views the case study method as an appropriate tool to better understand the dynamic of interactive social, cultural, personal, and academic phenomena in a university setting (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Johnson & Christensen, 2000; Yin, 2009). There are major specific strengths in using a

case study approach in this study: (1) a case study invites the researcher to analyse in depth the complex relationships between the quality assurance systems of two institutions on site and how the researcher can investigate them; (2) a case also allows the researcher to investigate how the different contexts within each country can influence quality assurance in each case; and, (3) the advantages are potentially enormous if a multiple case study research report is written in a question-and-answer format because the reader needs only to examine the answers to the same question for each case study to begin making cross-case comparisons. Thus, the case study approach provides the researcher with an opportunity to link particular forms of quality assurance phenomenon in each university and to examine particular contextual factors. Some weaknesses are also emphasised, for example, one common failing of comparative case studies is that the researcher describes multiple cases, but does not systematically and transparently identify and test causal propositions (Goodrick, 2014). Another weakness in case studies is that a case study cannot be tested or replicated due to the unique nature of each case. For example, the cases are analysed descriptively, but no causal analysis is undertaken, nor are any causal propositions rigorously tested. On balance, case study methodology was purposefully chosen as the most suitable design for this research endeavour. In the next section, the rationale for selecting a mixed method design within comparative case studies is presented.

3.3.2 Mixed method design within comparative case studies

The aim of this study was to explore, analyze and compare processes, contexts, and approaches for maintaining quality assurance in the two university case studies in Vietnam and Australia. Accordingly, Lather (1986) indicates that research paradigms inherently reflect our beliefs about the world we live in and want to live in. Therefore, to support the study's purposes, the research approaches needed to allow for the discovery of the experiences and opinions of those participating in the study. Drawing from the interpretative research paradigm, the exploratory nature of this study suggests that a mixed methods approach was most appropriate.

A mixed methods design with comparative case studies offers a procedure for collecting, analysing, and "mixing" both quantitative and qualitative research and

methods in a single study to understand a research problem (Creswell, 2012). A mixed methods research approach in this study was warranted for the following reasons. Firstly, mixed methods seeks the strengths and minimises the weaknesses of only qualitative or quantitative research methods (Clark & Creswell, 2011). Quantitative research often limits understandings of the contexts and the voices of participants, which are not heard in qualitative research. Qualitative research, on the other hand, is sometimes seen as deficient because of the interpretations made by the researcher, the potential bias created by this strategy, and the difficulty in generalizing findings to a large group because of the limited number of research participants. Thus, by combining the two approaches, the strengths of one approach may ameliorate the weaknesses of the other approach. Secondly, the combination of the qualitative and quantitative methods in mixed methods provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than one approach alone (Creswell, 2013). The data collection tools used in mixed methods are not restricted by the tools of data collection for qualitative only or quantitative only studies. Thirdly, mixed methods research can help answer questions that cannot be answered in a single qualitative or quantitative approach. Mixed methods can cater for both qualitative and quantitative results in one research study. Finally, as the researcher in this small research study comprising two universities, mixed methods enabled me to carry out an in-depth investigation into the current quality assurance models in each university. A mixed methods approach promoted my understandings of both academic leaders and academic staff experiences about quality assurance in their contexts.

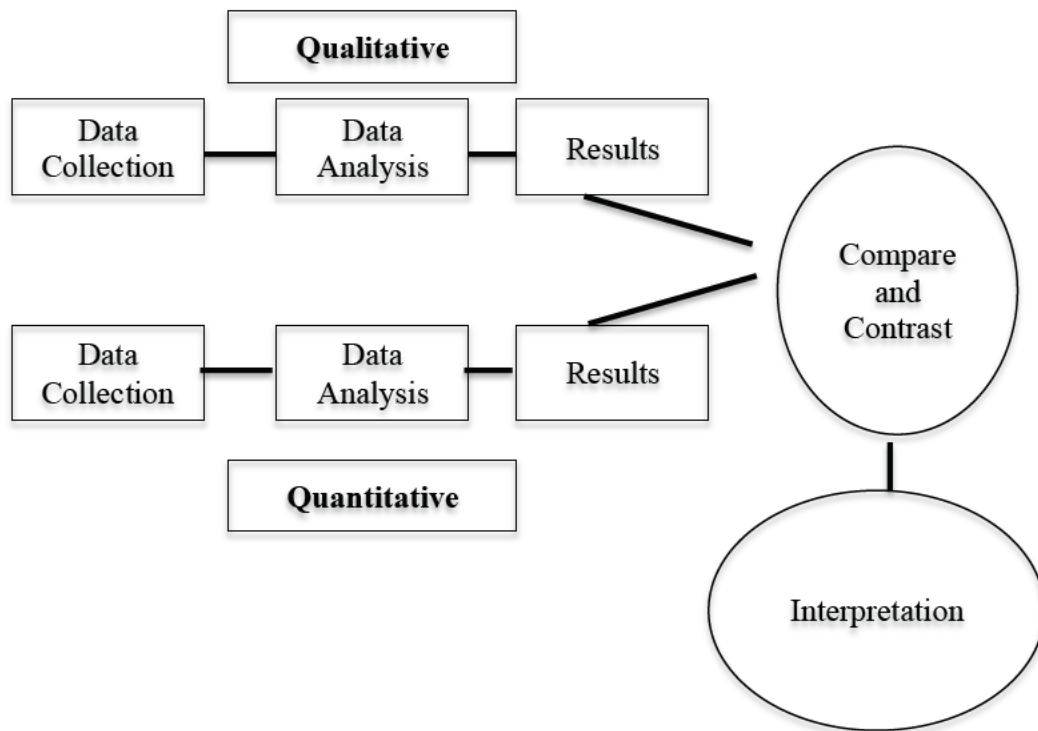
The strengths and weaknesses of mixed method design have been well discussed in the literature (Clark & Creswell, 2011; Creswell, 2014; Punch, 2005). The significant strengths are that a mixed methods approach in education research is useful for developing a better understanding of complex education phenomena by corroborating or complementing one set of results with another and thereby enhancing the validity of inferences (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Unlike a single method approach, a mixed method approach seeks understanding of complex issues through both qualitative and quantitative methods. The most significant reasons for linking both qualitative and quantitative methods in a single research study include triangulation, complementarity, initiation, development and expansion (Creswell, 2014; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). According to these authors, triangulation is a measurement technique that enables

confirmation, corroboration or correspondence of results from both qualitative and quantitative methods, whereas complementarity is another technique for seeking elaboration, enhancement and clarification of results using different methods. In addition, it is a process to seek new lines of thinking through attention to surprise or paradoxes, whereas development enables use of the results from one method to inform the other methods. Expansion enables extension of the breadth and range of inquiry using different methods. Therefore, a mixed methods approach not only adds to the research techniques, but also provides the opportunity for a synthesis of traditional methods. However, Creswell (2014) and Clark and Creswell (2011) emphasise that mixed methods may seem to be very difficult to manage and require much more analysis and rendition. More time and resources are involved and it may even be boring to the researcher (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Even though a mixed methods methodology, by its very nature, can be challenging and time-consuming, it can yield rich information that is not obtainable through quantitative statistical sampling techniques only. In order to address potential limitations of the mixed methods in this study, I considered thoroughly the purpose for mixing qualitative and quantitative approaches. The purpose was to provide well evidenced responses to the research questions plus a strong basis and substantive focus giving direction to the study and foundation for explanation. Also, quantitative evidence enhanced the credibility and authenticity of the case study by reducing the possibility of researcher bias. The methods of data collection are presented in the next section.

3.4 Methods of data collection

Data were obtained from documents, interviews and questionnaires. Triangulation was also supported through both qualitative and quantitative data collection. The rationale for multiple sources of evidence and triangulation was informed by Yin (2009). He notes that using multiple sources of evidence and triangulation in case study research promotes construct validity and reliability of the case study.

In this study, the mix of qualitative and quantitative methods were applied during the investigation and data analysis (see Figure 3.3 for a diagrammatical illustration of processes for this study).



Source: Creswell, Hanson, Plano-Clark, & Morales (2007, p.18)

Figure 3.3: Mixed methods data collection

Qualitative and quantitative data were collected in the same timeframe; however, the qualitative interview data was collected first as the main research data and to create an initial "richer and more complex picture of the phenomenon" is also appropriate for conducting the study (Mertens,2010, p. 265). Then, questionnaire surveys were undertaken. The two databases were mixed by merging the results during analysis and interpretation. The purpose of the parallel data collection and analyses for this study was to obtain deeper understandings of the two case study quality assurance systems. It also enabled me to compare multiple academic level perspectives about the quality assurance processes in the two universities. The methods of data collection and procedures in this study will be further discussed in Section 3.4.

The qualitative and quantitative data for this research were drawn from the analysis of key documents and interviews and questionnaires with participants in the field in the two universities. Qualitative data were used to explore in-depth the social contexts that influence quality in each university, and unpack key participant

perceptions of quality assurance and how quality assurance could be improved in each university. Quantitative data were used to analyse statistics about participants' responses to quality assurance and evaluate the variables influencing quality assurance in each university. Data collection and analysis is further explained in Section 3.4.

As there were a small number of case studies, comprising two universities, these methods enabled in-depth analysis to be carried out on current quality assurance models in each university. Multiple sources of data promoted my understandings of the experiences of quality assurance of both academic leaders and academic staff in the context of their work. Even though multiple sources of data, by their nature, can be emotionally taxing and extraordinarily time-consuming, such data yields rich information not obtainable through statistical sampling techniques only.

The multiple sources of data in this study were based on two phases. Firstly, the in-depth interviews and document analysis would yield evidence from which conclusions about the quality assurance policies and policies generally in each university could be drawn. Secondly, the questionnaire surveys would produce statistics that determined each participant's responses to quality assurance enquiries and permit evaluation of the variables influencing quality assurance in each university. In addition, these data collection methods were conducted at the same time, but the analyses of the data were conducted for different purposes to seek divergent or convergent findings, for comparison between the two university case studies, and to generate data that addressed the different research questions. The analysis of documentary sources, interviews and questionnaires are presented in the next section.

3.4.1 Analysis of documentary sources

Analysis of documentary sources is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating both printed documents and electronic material (Bowen, 2009). According to Bryman (2012) and Creswell (2012), such documents provide a rich source of data in social sciences research and are valuable sources of information in qualitative research. In addition, Bowen (2009) and Grbich (2012) note that

documentary sources can be combined with data from interviews and other data collection methods to create triangulation within a case study. Documentary sources may include notes, case reports, contracts, drafts, death certificates, remarks, diaries, statistics, annual reports, certificates, judgments, letters, expert opinions and government pronouncements and proceedings (Wolff, 2004).

In this study, I initially determined the relevance of documentary sources to the research problem and purpose. Documentary sources analysed were both government quality assurance policies and institutional quality assurance policies. The process of analysis is outlined in Section 3.6.1. There were four main purposes for the analysis. The first was to provide useful contextual material on current quality assurance policies and practices in the two universities. The second was to gather information such as history, scale and infrastructure about the two universities where the interviews were conducted. Thirdly, the data for the document analysis were focused on analysis of mission statements, strategic plans, external and internal quality audits, and the current annual quality assurance reports in each university. Finally, documentary analysis served as a component of data triangulation to establish the validity of data collected from the interviews and questionnaires. In order to fulfill this purpose, a wide range of both public and private documents related to quality assurance at both national and institutional levels were analysed.

Other documentary sources were collected through a search of the universities' published websites or any hardcopies of documents available. Keywords were used to search for information on the universities' websites such as 'assessment', 'course purpose', 'criteria', 'evaluation', 'learning', 'management', 'performance', 'planning', 'quality assurance', 'review', 'teaching' and other relevant quality assurance key words. An important dimension of this analysis was the degree of congruence between policy text and policy in practice in each institution. It was in the implementation process where tensions between the various aspects were most evident.

Although researchers such as Niglas and Pedagoogikaülikool (2004) and Creswell (2014) agree that documentary sources are unobtrusively sought at low cost, easily

stored and readily re-analysed, there are also challenges in using documentary sources for data collection. Firstly, the purpose of the research may not be congruent with the purposes of the original document (Cortazzi, 2002). Secondly, care must be taken with regard to the meanings of the documents and how they contribute to the research issue because documents should not be treated as necessarily precise or complete (Bowen, 2009). Lastly, I was constrained by time during the process of documentary source analysis. Documentary source analysis needs to avoid selection bias and occur within timeframes. In order to meet these challenges, the selection of documents was balanced and those chosen I considered to be the most fundamental and significant documentary sources relevant to the study. Therefore, the document analysis helped fill some of the missing data pieces and helped raise new questions regarding the authenticity of interview and survey data. In the next section data collection from interviews are presented.

3.4.2 Data collection from interviews

In social research, interviews occur as an important method of data collection. Seidman (2012) states that interviews are a qualitative research method that can be used to investigate educational organisations and institutions, and are accepted as primary sources for promoting researchers' understandings of the experiences of the individual people, who are policy makers or members of such organisations. For instance, Patton (2002) agrees that interview data offers in-depth information about the opinions and experiences of the interviewees. There are various types of interviews that can be used in mixed methods design. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), the two types of interview methods for data collection are semi-structured and unstructured. Semi-structured and unstructured interviews have greater flexibility and freedom than other types of interviews due to the content, sequence and wording of the questions being asked.

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used as a data collection method for exploring ideas. Based on the analysis in the literature review concerning quality assurance in the university, the theoretical framework and key research questions, a semi-structured interview schedule was developed for each case study site. The

aim of using, such an interview design was to investigate institutional participants' perceptions and responses to various quality assurance matters and how these matters impacted on formulating and implementing quality assurance systems in each university case study. For this reason, the interviews in this study clarified information in the documents analysed about quality assurance provisions, processes and future developments.

The semi-structured interview approach was also employed in this study because the information needed in this research required depth rather than breadth. Semi-structured interviews can seek insights into what the interviewees is for determining relevance and importance. The researcher as the interviewer often needs to follow up interesting points raised by the interviewee, by prompting or probing whenever necessary. One-on-one individual, face-to-face interviews were conducted between the researcher and interviewees.

The locations for the interviews were also considered in this study. The researcher and respondents negotiated a common location for each interview. All of the interviews for this study were conducted in the respondents' office or at a place that the respondents felt comfortable and secure to talk freely (Cohen et al., 2000). The languages used in the interviews were either Vietnamese or English. All of the Vietnamese interviews were translated into English by the researcher after being verified with the interviewees.

For this research, the following semi-structured interview steps were taken:

- Contact with potential interviewees before the interview. The aim of contact with the interviewees was to provide general information about the research, and the data collection plan for the study to ascertain their interest in participating. These contacts were facilitated by an introduction and invitation letter (see Appendix 6). In addition, such initial contacts with interviewees were made to determine interview arrangements.
- The semi-structured interview was based on a list of open-ended questions or general topics to guide the researcher (see Appendix 12). The list of questions

helped to promote effective use of limited interview time; it made interviewing multiple subjects more systematic and comprehensive and helped to keep interactions focused. Before the interviews were conducted, the researcher pre-tested the interview questions under the guidance of two senior lecturers in order to hone both the questions and the researcher's interviewing skills. The pre-test interview process is outlined in the Section 3.5.

- Each interview was conducted for approximately 45 minutes as in-depth, face-to-face interview between the researcher and interviewee. Each interview was audio-recorded and notes were taken prompt the researcher's were accurate recall of the information given and the recording was transcribed for data analysis.

Ethical aspects of interviewing, such as informed consent, confidentiality and use of information interview data are fully discussed later in this chapter.

There are several strengths and weaknesses of semi-structured interviews that should be considered when considering this form of data collection. Semi-structured interviews are easy to replicate as a fixed set of closed questions are used that are easy to quantify, which means it is easy to test for reliability (Seidman, 2012; Zohrabi, 2013). Another strength of semi-structured interviews is that they are time effective to conduct, which means that many interviews can take place within a short period. However, typical weaknesses in semi-structured interviews include failure to be flexible in asking new added questions as an interview schedule must be followed. Additionally, having the skills required to analyse data from semi-structured interviews can be a problem. There is a-risk of constructing too much. This means that semi-structured interviews provide as much detail as the open-ended questions asked to generate qualitative data (Seidman, 2012). This means a research will be more time consuming and resource intensive in semi-structured interviews. In the next section, data collection using questionnaires is discusses.

3.4.3 Data collection from questionnaires

The questionnaire is a popular method of data collection in social research because the questionnaire can provide three types of data: qualitative, quantitative and mixed. Zohrabi (2013) states that questionnaires are doubtless one of the primary sources of obtaining data in any research endeavor. There are two types of questionnaires: structured and unstructured. Structured questionnaires are based on a list of closed questions that provide quantitative data that can be analysed for patterns and trends (Axinn & Pearce, 2006). Unstructured questionnaires, on the other hand, are based on a list of open-ended questions that allow respondents freedom to answer in their own words and therefore, to provide greater qualification in their responses. With regard to the nature of the research questions developed, a structured questionnaire was designed for academic staff within the selected universities, in order to gauge their perceptions about the effectiveness of quality assurance policies, implementation of quality assurance, relevant impacts of factors and applications for maintaining quality assurance in each university.

The questionnaire consisted of questions grouped into five sections, with similar content for both universities, but delivered in the two local languages English and Vietnamese (See Appendix 13). Part A sought the demographic background of participants including each participant's qualifications, current position, length of employment and how many hours the participant usually spent weekly on teaching, research and academic activities during the academic semester. The next two parts (B and C) consisted of questions concerning participants' knowledge of quality assurance in their institution and quality assurance practices. In particular, Part C, investigated the current quality assurance performance in each university which included both establishing quality assurance and the methods to evaluate quality assurance. The next part, Part D, concerned the resources, support services and working conditions for securing and maintaining quality assurance at the institution. The last part, Part E, dealt with perspectives on current quality assurance in each institution.

The questionnaires included a mixture of Likert-type questions and open-ended questions. The Likert-type questions presented a choice of four or five pre-coded responses and invited participants to express how much they agreed or disagreed with particular statements. However, most of the questions were open-ended, giving the participants opportunities to contribute their opinions and perceptions where applicable by expressing themselves in their own words. The responses to the Vietnamese questionnaires were later translated into English by the researcher. The pre-test questionnaire survey for this study is outlined in Section 3.5.

Within the questionnaire procedure, the hardcopy questionnaires were delivered to the U-VN by the Head of Department in each department due to the research culture in Vietnam. In SOE-AU, on the other hand, the online questionnaire tool Survey Monkey was used to conduct the questionnaire with the staff members.

Like other research methods, questionnaires have strengths and limitations. Liamputtong (2013) agrees that questionnaires are the most common way method for many researchers because they can be undertaken at low cost and are usually faster than other methods in generating qualitative data for analysis. Another strength is that questionnaires are used to collect larger amounts of data in social research about what people think and what they do (Creswell, 2014). However, a common failing in the use of this data collection method is that questionnaires cannot relate the context and meaning behind a response.

The research data from questionnaires, documents, and interviews supported deeper understandings and descriptions of the current quality assurance in each university case study. The pilot testing will be explained further in the following section.

3.5 Pilot testing

To ensure that all the interview and questionnaire questions were clear to interviewees and respondents, and could be answered in a reasonable period of

time, the questions were piloted with four participants, four at each of the two universities. These were:

- Two former academic leaders, one of whom worked in the U-VN and another who worked in the SOE-AU.
- Two former academic staff, one of whom worked in the U-VN and another who worked in the SOE-AU.

The usual time to undertake the interview pilot was 35 to 50 minutes, and the questionnaire pilot test took 20 to 25 minutes to complete. Some interview and questionnaire questions were later edited to clarify the meanings. Some new questions were also added to both the interview and questionnaire to seek more comprehensive data. Data gathered from the pilot testing were not used to present the research results. The pilot testing results were helpful in clarifying the questions and contributed to the final interview and questionnaire proformas in this study.

3.6 Selecting the case studies, participants and procedures for data collection

The purpose for selecting sites or participants is based on consideration of which populations or phenomena are relevant, and they are selected to provide the information needed to address the purpose of the research (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). This research took place in sites that were selected based on the prior knowledge of the researcher and the information available. The two sites were the U-VN and SOE-AU in the two countries (U-VN is located in Vietnam and SOE-AU is located in Australia). The reasoning and details of each case study are outlined below.

3.6.1 Selecting the case studies

As noted earlier, the issue of quality assurance in universities has become a worldwide concern and it encompasses the differences between quality assurance policies and practices in universities of developed and developing countries. Comparative studies addressing how quality assurance policies and practices are similar and different

between universities in developing and developed countries are also of great interest. Consequently, the selection of the context within which quality assurance policies are studied is crucial. In this study of quality assurance policies and practices the two case studies were the U-VN and the SOE-AU. The factors guiding this choice were both intellectual and personal as detailed below.

Firstly, this research study was implemented in the contexts I selected based on prior knowledge and information. The U-VN is a new university established in 2009, and had been assigned a special mission by the Vietnamese Government to demonstrate an advanced model of teacher training in a multi-disciplinary and multi-sector field aimed at high quality. Therefore, enhanced quality assurance was a major concern at U-VN. In addition, the U-VN was located in Hanoi, the capital city of Vietnam where positive changes or innovations in teaching and learning have been initiated over a period of time. On the other hand, the SOE-AU, academic school of a university in New South Wales, Australia, had been developing instruments for quality assurance in teaching, learning and research since its establishment in 1938. In 2012 and 2015, the university was awarded five-stars in all six categories measured by the dimensions of Australian university quality assurance. The SOE-AU, in particular, was well known for its excellence in teaching, learning and research activities. The two university case studies provided a favourable opportunity to research quality assurance and one likely to be of particular value for developing countries.

Secondly, the two case studies selected in this study were public universities. Within the national sense, the public universities share similar external policy and funding circumstances. For example, the implementation of quality assurance systems in the two universities was in accordance with a national quality assurance framework, quality assurance policies, funding and managerial policies. Therefore, this comparative study will investigate the current quality assurance policies and practices in the two universities in Australia and Vietnam as broadly representative of both developed countries and developing countries.

Thirdly, practical constraints were also considered as these can affect the size and number of institutions included in a multiple case study, particularly when the time and costs of overseas travel are involved along with the limitations of PhD candidature. This study was carried out as a single research study over a three-year period, and the limited amount of time and resources led to this study being conducted in two universities. They are both mid-size institutions. The U-VN had a total student enrolment of approximately 1,163 students in 2015 (VN, 2015c), whereas approximately 4,679 students were enrolled at the SOE-AU (AU, 2016h).

Furthermore, the U-VN was located in Hanoi City where I have lived and worked, while the SOE-AU was the academic base for my PhD candidature. Therefore, it was economically cost effective and time efficient to carry out these particular case studies.

Within these constraints, it was decided the two universities in Vietnam and Australia would be sufficient to gather the required evidence to investigate the research questions. The selection of participants is outlined in the next section.

3.6.2 Selecting participants

One of the most important tasks of mixed methods research is to identify participants who could best provide deeper understandings of the phenomenon under consideration (Hansman, 2004). There are two major methods that researchers often use when selecting participants: random sampling and purposive sampling (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Liamputtong, 2013; Silverman, 2014). In terms of the aims of this study, all academic leaders participants were selected using purposive sampling for the interview's purposes. The principle of the sample selection is that researchers must consider the overall validity of the research design, and the sampling plan and the parameters should align with the purposes and questions of the study (Janesick, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1987). Then, all academic staff in the two university case studies were asked to participate in the study surveys.

In consideration of the particular circumstances at each institution and the purpose of the research, five academic leader individuals at each university were chosen as participants. All participants were selected using “purposive sampling” because the potential participants needed to be managers of quality assurance with different levels, scope, range of responsibilities and authority. This sampling decision was made to ensure that the samples provide a wide range of the knowledge and experiences about quality assurances in the university institutions. The selection of the manager participants interviewed was based on the position they held at the time of the interviews. Table 3.1 provides the number and distribution of participants at the two research sites.

Table 3.1: Summary of positions held by academic leader interviewees at both universities

Case study 1: U-VN		Case study 2: SOE-AU	
Positions	Interviewees	Positions	Interviewees
Rector	1	Head of School	1
Vice Rector	1	Deputy Heads of School	1
Director of Training Department	1	Chair of Teaching and Learning	1
Head of the Education Department	1	Chair of Research	1
Head of Sciences Education	1	Department Academic Manager	1
Director of Quality Assurance Department	1		
Total	6		5

All academic staff at the two case study university case studies were invited to complete the questionnaire surveys. The questionnaires contained a list of questions about quality assurance policies and practices regarding problem areas of quality such as the academic’s perceptions about academic programs, teaching and learning, learning resources, students, assessment and evaluation, curriculum, student services and support, physical resources. The purpose of the questionnaire is to gather quantitative data. Table 3.2 provides the number and distribution of participants at the two research sites.

Table 3.1 Questionnaire response rate for academic staff

Case study 1: U-VN		Case study 2: SOE-AU	
Distributed	Returned	Distributed	Returned
50	41	81	34

3.5.3 Data collection procedures

As the case studies for the research included the U-VN and the SOE-AU in different countries, the data collection was conducted in two phases. The initial phase involved data collection in Vietnam and the final phase was in Australia.

The data collection at the U-VN was conducted from 25 June to 30 July 2015 and at the SOE-AU from 10 August to 1 October 2015. The documentary analysis, questionnaires and interviews were conducted in the same period within each university allowing the researcher to explore and generate new ideas to potentially make the findings more valuable (Creswell, 2014). The time schedule for interviews in the two universities is summarised in Table 3.3.

Table 3.2 Time schedule for interviews with academic leader in the two universities

Universities	Start Date	Finish Date
U-VN	22,June 2015	30,July2015
SOE-AU	17,August 2015	1,October 2015

The questionnaires were sent to all academic staff in each university on the same day or the day after the interviews with academic leaders. The time schedule for the questionnaires in the two universities is provided in Table 3.4.

Table 3.3 The time schedule for questionnaires in the two universities

Universities	Date Distributed	Date Returned
U-VN	1,Jul 2015	18,Jul 2015
SOE-AU	1,Sep 2015	30,Sep 2015

Documents were gathered in the form of hard copies throughout the data collection time period in each university. However, some documents were received via university websites and secured before, during and after the data collection time periods. In the next section, the methods of data analysis are described.

3.7 Data analysis

Analysis is the way in which the researcher moves from a description of what is the case to an explanation of why, deriving patterns in the data, looking for general orientations and trying to sort out what the data are about, and why and what kinds of things might be said about them (Grbich, 2012). The literature on the methods of data analysis show that there are some stages of data analysis that occur simultaneously and repeatedly. Data analysis may begin informally during the

interviews or observations and continue during the transcription when recurring themes, patterns, and categories become evident (Creswell, 2014). Once written records are available, analysis involves the coding of data and the identification of salient points or structures. Moreover, Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that data analysis begins with an identification of the themes emerging from the raw data. In this stage, it is important to identify and tentatively name the conceptual categories into which the phenomena observed could be grouped to create descriptive, multi-dimensional categories. Words, phrases, or events that appear to be similar can be grouped into the same category. These categories may be gradually modified or replaced during the subsequent stages of analysis. When the raw data are broken down into manageable chunks, it is also important to arrange these data chunks according to the context. The next stage is to re-examine the categories identified to determine how they are linked (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to build a conceptual model, and to determine whether sufficient data exist to support that interpretation. The categories identified are compared and combined in the new ways as the researcher begins to assemble the “big picture” The purpose is not simply to describe but, more importantly, to acquire new understandings of a phenomenon of interest. Therefore, underlining events contributing to the phenomenon, descriptive details of the phenomenon itself, and the result of the phenomenon under study must be identified and explored. The analysis process is followed by translating the conceptual model into a story line so that the research report will be a rich, tightly woven account that “closely approximates the reality it represents” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 57).

In this study, I promoted a triangulation of data through the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data from the U-VN and the SOE-AU. Based on the nature of the data sources, in this study I adopted a procedure for analysing as a combination of methods proposed by Yin (1994). He suggests a step approach for analysing both the qualitative and quantitative data: examining, categorising, and tabulating or recombining the evidence. These ideas were employed as the organising framework for data analysis.

The quality assurance policies and documents were analysed and summarised for this research in two stages. Firstly, the documents were read several times for information related to the current government quality assurance policies as relevant to the quality assurance policies and practices in each university. Secondly, documents at an institutional level were read carefully to determine if any policies existed with regard to quality assurance policies and practices. Quality assurance document analysis was used as a form of cross-referencing to obtain evidence to verify and corroborate the interview and questionnaire data. Some of these documents were also used to provide the context in which governance operates in the universities (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Mason & Handscomb, 2002). In addition, the information analysed from these documentary sources was employed by the researcher to identify the quality assurance model used and the nature of quality assurance at the two universities. The document analysis assisted triangulation of data and thereby increased the reliability of the conclusions drawn from the study.

The data analysis of interview transcripts followed three stages. Firstly, interviews were transcribed from audio-recorded interviews and points made were tagged with interview numbers and the date on which the interview took place. Brief notes were made on emerging themes, questions, confusions, reflections, and new lines of thinking as reminders to be developed at a later stage of interpretation. A reference system was developed by numbering the lines on individual pages of the interview transcripts and field notes. The interview number, date and pseudonym of the respondent were recorded on the transcripts. In combination, the interview date, respondent's pseudonym, page number, and a number of the line containing the relevant information served as the code for reference. The interviews with the research participants were conducted in either Vietnamese or English as relevant. All Vietnamese interview data were translated into English prior to data analysis.

Secondly, categorisation of micro-themes was conducted to create five most numerous micro-themes from the preliminary analysis: perceptions of quality assurance, quality assurance policies, quality assurance performance, quality control measures factors affecting quality assurance and perspectives on quality assurance

development. A data analysis summary sheet was developed consisting of a table with six columns and completed with evidence relevant to the micro-themes.

Finally, I examined the data for patterns and relationships both within a collection and also across the collections and general discoveries were sought concerning the quality assurance at each university.

In addition, during the processing of the quality assurance documents and analysis of the interview transcripts, new concepts and themes emerged to verify ideas or draw possible conclusions that were helpful in presenting the findings. Analysis of document-based data concurrently with the interview-based data and field notes, revealed a logical chain of data that led the researcher to reach overall conclusions that were, analytically speaking, greater than the sum of the data. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences-Version 24 (SPSS) computer software was used to analyse quantitative data collected from the questionnaires. The aim of analysing the data was to illustrate and clarify questionnaire findings to establish the validity of the qualitative analysis.

However, as this research was a comparative case study, instead of dealing with the two cases separately the subsequent examination of evidence was a cross-case analysis. Patterns were sought looking at the cross-cutting themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994) for similarities and differences between the two case studies. The cross-case comparative analysis of the quality assurance system between the two universities forms the overall content of the findings chapter in this thesis.

3.8 Ethical issues and considerations

One of the most important roles when conducting research is the responsibility for ethical issues. According to Wellington (2003, p. 50) “ethics” refer to the “moral principles, guiding conduct, which are held by a group or even a profession”. In social research, ‘ethics’ refers to respect for human dignity. There are three main

areas requiring ethical consideration in this study: informed consent, confidentiality and the consequences (Berg & Lune, 2004). Since the study involved human participants, an application was submitted to the Human Research Ethics Committee and this was approved by the Human Research Ethical Committee of the University of New England (Approval No HE15-152 Valid to 03/06/2016) (see Appendix 1). Sampling and data collection proceeded in accordance with the principles underlined in the Human Research Ethical Committee Form.

In addition, before conducting the research at the U-VN and the SOE-AU, official permission was required from the universities to undertake the research. Written application was made to administrators at both institutions to ask permission to conduct the research in each university and select participants. In Vietnam, a letter of permission to conduct this research was obtained from the Monitoring Office of Program 165 to undertake research in the U-VN (see Appendix 2). Receipt of this permission was followed by a formal letter asking for permission from the Rector to conduct the research at the U-VN and also to interview selected participants in a place convenient to them (see Appendix 3).

In Australia, a letter asking for permission was directed to the Head of School (see Appendix 4). The Rector and the Head of School of the two case studies provided a signed agreement letter for permission to conduct interviews and a questionnaire survey at their respective universities (see Appendix 5).

Before the interviews and questionnaires were conducted, a formal invitation letter, an information sheet that included the aim of the research and the research approach, and a participation consent form assuring confidentiality were sent to academic leaders and academic staff (see Appendices 6, 7, 8 and 9). The participants in this study completed an individual consent form indicating their agreement to participate in the study and consented by finishing the questionnaire survey online (see Appendices 10 and 11). In this research, participants could withdraw from the research without question at any stage before the data were analysed.

Results were treated confidentially and anonymity maintained throughout by the use of pseudonyms and codes. All data collected as field notes, interview transcripts and

databases, are kept secure in a locked cabinet and will be destroyed two years after the end of the research study.

In short, with regard to ethics requirements, the authorities and the participants were provided with detailed information about the study that included its purpose, its intended benefits, the sampling criteria, the timeline of the study, the data collection tools and procedures and an assurance of confidentiality and anonymity.

3.9 Summary

This chapter has presented the theoretical framework and the research methodology of this study. Starting with the theoretical framework, a description was provided of how this study of quality assurance was conducted in the two universities by exploring the experiences, insights, ideas and perspectives of academic leaders and staff concerning the quality assurance improvements they pursue in their university. This chapter gave a rationale for conducting the research in the mixed methods paradigm, and why a comparative case study was employed as a research design for this study. Data collection involved interviews, semi-structured questionnaires and document analysis to increase validity, to discover quality assurance perceptions and to compare the similarities and differences between the two universities in different contexts. A pilot study and the procedure for data collection were explained. The data analysis process was presented, which involved the identification of micro-themes, categorisation of the micro-themes and synthesis of the micro-themes to identify broader categories. The stages of analysis occurred simultaneously and repeatedly. It was a cyclical process from specific to general. Finally, ethical issues and considerations in this research have been discussed. The next chapter presents the results of the document source analysis in this research study.

Chapter 4 Overview of quality assurance systems for the two case studies

4.1 Introduction

As previously discussed, a quality assurance system is not necessarily the same in each country or in each university. The different quality assurance systems in higher education in each nation tend to reflect social and higher education institutional contexts, and also have imperatives that promote each institution's identity. In order to understand the quality assurance system in each university case study, it was necessary to explore the quality assurance systems at both national and institutional levels. Also, relevant contextual factors that have influenced the development of quality assurance policies and practices must be explored. For the purposes of this study, in this chapter I outline the contexts and quality assurance frameworks adopted by each of the two case study universities. This chapter is derived from various current quality assurance policies, documents obtained from the two case studies and also materials from the university websites. This chapter is presented in two parts: In part one, I provide an overview of quality assurance at the U-VN, and part two presents an overview of quality assurance the SOE-AU. The description of each part includes: Firstly, an outline of each university including location, infrastructure, human resources, quality assurance development, and current challenges is provided. Secondly, there is a focus on the quality assurance system in each case study university including governance, strategic planning, the quality assurance criteria adopted for undergraduate education, approaches to evaluation and macro-influences on quality assurance.

Part 1: University case study in Vietnam

4.2 Case study context

Each university has its own characteristics and organisational structures that are integral to the university functions. This section provides a brief description of the U-VN that includes: physical structures, establishment and recent development.

4.2.1 Location and infrastructure

The national higher education institution (VN) was the largest comprehensive higher education institution and research centre in Vietnam. The VN is known as the first modern university established and one of the two national universities in Vietnam. At the time of my data collection, the VN incorporated six university members and the public U-VN was the case under study and the newest member established in 2009.

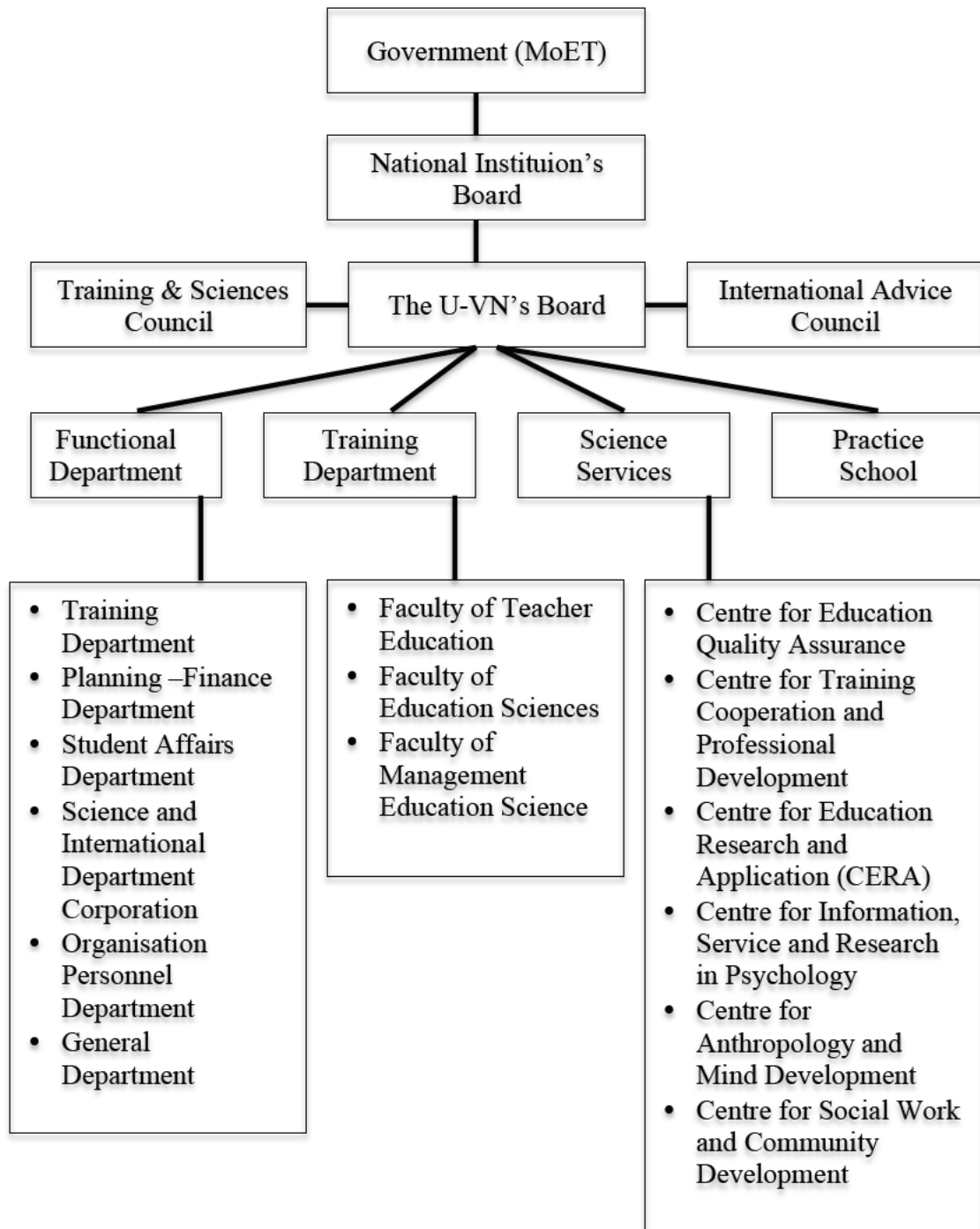
The regional university member of the national higher education (U-VN) was located in Hanoi, the capital city of Vietnam. Hanoi is considered a centre of politics, culture, science, technology, communications, manufacturing and tourism, and is the major centre of trade and international economics in the country. Under the rule of the French and Americans from 1948 to 1975, Hanoi witnessed and reflected changes in infrastructure and lifestyle. The city blends Eastern and Western characteristics in a unique way, preserving its heritage in the Old Quarter with ancient pagodas, monuments, and colonial architecture, as well as housing modern developments in technology and academic activities, including many universities established under French and American rule (Harman et al., 2010).

The U-VN shared facilities such as libraries and laboratories with the other five university members of the VN. U-VN had two campuses in Hanoi: one is located in Cau Giay District and other located in Thanh Xuan District. However, a new campus of the U-VN will be constructed in Hoa Lac, Thach That District, Ha Noi around 30km northwest of Hanoi. The new campus under contract will have an area of over 18 hectares, including laboratory buildings, lecture halls, a library, a centre for training, research institutions, conference rooms, entertainment centres and a sports modern complex to serve teacher training and scientific research (AU, 2015c). The new campus of U-VN is expected to be a model for other new universities in Vietnam.

4.2.2 Establishment and governance structure

Founded in 2009, the U-VN was based on the Faculty of Pedagogy, which was previously established in 1999 by the VN. At the time, the Faculty of Pedagogy

marked a new innovative model of teacher training in the Vietnamese educational system (VN, 2015a). The aim of this model was to continue the teacher-training model, but link it to a multidisciplinary university of high quality. The governance structure of U-VN is summarised in Figure 4.1.



Source: Retrieved from the institution's website

Figure 4.1: The governance structure of the university case study

4.2.3 Human resources and recent developments

The U-VN has grown substantially in both enrolments and training programs. As of 2015, the U-VN had about 2,710 full-time undergraduate students, 620 part-time students and about 610 postgraduate students across 13 courses in Bachelor of Pedagogical degrees, 7 in Master's degrees and 11 in Educational Administration degrees. From 2007 to 2015, the U-VN had trained more than 2,000 teachers from nearly 50 universities and colleges of education in tertiary professional pedagogy and other short-term refresher courses.

The students at U-VN were distributed across three academic faculties: Faculty of Teacher Education, Faculty of Education Sciences and Faculty of Management Education Science. According to the U-VN, in 2015 the U-VN was supported by 146 academic staff. The administration departments included Personnel and Administrative Office, Accounting and Finance Office, Academic and Student Affairs Office and the Research and International Relations Office (VN, 2015c).

The following section examines the quality assurance narrative in Vietnamese higher education and the U-VN.

4.3 Quality assurance narrative in Vietnamese higher education and at the U-VN

Concern about quality assurance is relevant to higher education growth. Since the 2000's, quality assurance has become a central concept and controversial issue in Vietnamese higher education (Nguyen, Oliver, & Priddy, 2009). In this section, I briefly describe a quality assurance narrative that I drew on to investigate quality assurance at both national and institutional levels.

4.3.1 Quality assurance narrative in Vietnamese higher education

The Vietnamese higher education quality assurance movement has been actively pursued at U-VN in recent years and been hotly debated, particularly in regard to the university sector. There are several relevant reasons for this. Firstly, Vietnam was

and still is in the process of rapidly expanding its higher education enrolments. For example, higher education enrolments totalled 162,000 students in 1992 (Hac, 1995). By 2010, the system had over 2.02 million students, and in 2015, this number had increased to 2.36 million students . Secondly, the MoET was under great pressure to increase access while simultaneously raising the quality of higher education (Nguyen et al., 2009). Thirdly, under increasing globalisation and internationalization, Vietnamese higher education had been under pressure to meet international standards to promote their students experience of high-quality teaching and learning and a relevant education as required by the national government, employers and other institutions.

In response to efforts to establish greater independence in higher education and higher standards, MoET formed the Centre of Education Quality Assurance and Research Development (CEQA) in 1999 (Nguyen et al., 2009), which marked the first time the Vietnamese Government had been given the task to conduct research on accreditation in higher education. In March 2002, national research was undertaken to create a list of accreditation criteria for Vietnamese higher education. The research resulted in a list of criteria for evaluating the conditions required to assure the quality of teaching and learning in higher education institutions. At this time, twenty-six criteria across eight areas were suggested for all higher education institutions. The State Scientific Committee approved the research results and requested government authorities use the criteria for quality assurance accrediting purposes.

One year later in 2003, the General Department of Education Testing and Accreditation (GDETA) was published by MoET. With the help of government, the MoET and support from quality assurance international organisations, GDETA became a member of the Higher Education Standard Network, which included the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN), the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAA), and the ASEAN Quality Assurance Networks (QAN). The membership of these networks gave Vietnam an opportunity to improve the development of Vietnam's Higher Education Quality Assurance System (VNHQA), thereby realising higher education standards.

However, until December 2004, the Vietnamese Government used a quality assurance system from the USA as its point of reference to build higher education accreditation standards (MoET, 2004b). The rationale was that at this time the USA was a successful country in higher education quality assurance. As a result, the Provisional Regulations on Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions was published in 2004 by MoET (MoET, 2004a). According to this policy, ten quality assurance standards for accreditation of higher education institutions were set up and a three-stage process of accreditation specified involving institutional self-evaluation, peer-review and external evaluation. However, owing to circumstances arising from social and historical contexts such as inadequate quality assurance resources, lack of independent quality assurance agencies and lack of quality assurance experts, only self-evaluation and peer-review were utilised as key elements of the accreditation process (Harman et al., 2010).

Later, in 2007, the Vietnamese Standards for Quality Accreditation on Higher Education were published by the MoET (MoET, 2007). There were ten standards comprising fifty-three criteria that comprehensively covered the activities of the higher education institutions. With the help of international educational organisations and national education experts, several guideline documents were created that provided instructions to the university institutions for gathering evidence for external evaluators to use during visits. After two years of piloting and supporting, the final Promulgation of Regulations on Tertiary Education Quality Standards were published with ten standards and sixty-one criteria. The ten standards are summarised as follows:

1. Mission and objective of the university (2 criteria),
2. Organisation and management (7 criteria),
3. Training programs (6 criteria),
4. Training activities (7 criteria),
5. Management staff, lecturers and staff (8 criteria),
6. Learners (9 criteria),
7. Scientific research and technology development (7 criteria),
8. International cooperation (3 criteria),
9. Library, learning equipment and other facilities (9 criteria), and
10. Finance and financial management (3 criteria).

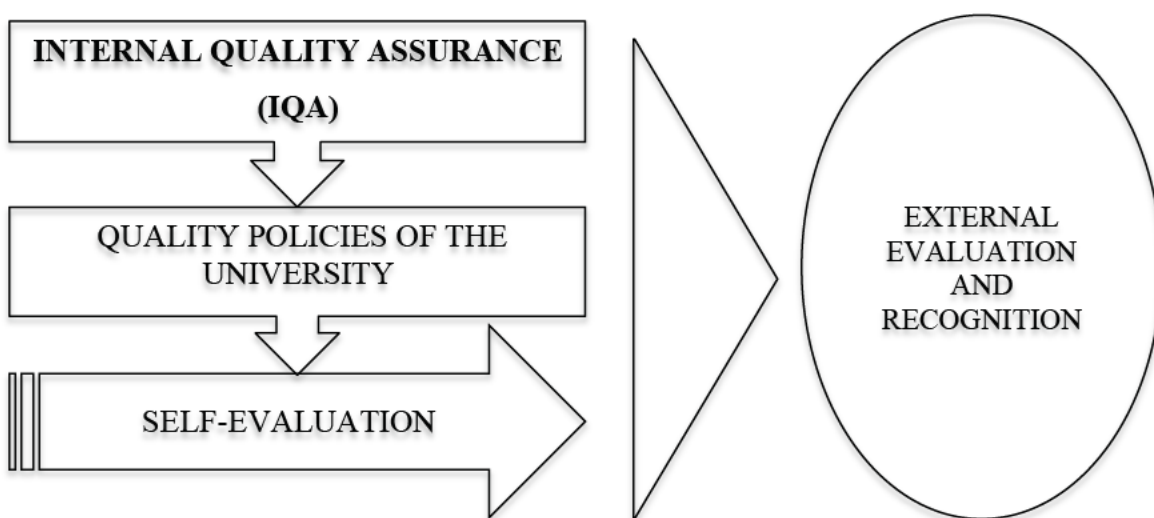
Supporting these specific standards, in 2012, the Higher Education Act (HEA) was adopted to provide objectives and subjects of higher education accreditation. These are summarised below:

1. The objectives of higher education are to promote and improve the quality of higher education institutions; define the levels that meet mission statements and objectives and provide information for students and employers.
2. The principles of quality control in higher education are independence, objectivity, compliance, honesty, openness and transparency.
3. The responsibility for higher education in quality assurance is to establish the Internal Quality Act, develop implement an IQA plan, maintain quality assurance conditions, and publicise quality assurance conditions, academic and research results.
4. The duties and powers of higher education institutions in higher education quality assurance are to be assessed by external accreditation agencies with publicized information and results of accreditation processes (MoET, 2014a, p. 2).

This set of specific standards and broad objectives were aimed to help all universities in Vietnam conduct their self-evaluation. The purpose of self-evaluation was to maintain and continue these university institutions, recognise the achievements of the universities and provide university information for students when selecting a university. According to Nguyen et al. (2009), the establishment of standards for Vietnamese universities has an important role to play in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. It not only reflects quality assurance development at both national and institutional levels, but also positions the universities to meet the minimum quality assurance standards. In addition, the Vietnamese Government played a major role in directly leading quality assurance processes in their universities by providing a quality assurance model, monitoring processes and quality assurance evaluation (MoET, 2014b).

The procedures of quality assurance within Vietnamese universities begin with self-evaluation. In this process, each university has a most important role in quality assurance processes because the solutions to enhancing quality assurance are based on an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses for each higher education criterion. In

addition, self-evaluation promotes autonomous responsibility for financial resources and access to the labour market for the benefit of the entire society. The external review team verifies such achievements after the university has conducted a self-evaluation. The aim of external reviews is to be granted to both training program development and other university activities in accordance with current higher education quality assurance standards. An overview of quality assurance procedures in Vietnamese universities is summarised in Figures 4.2 and 4.3.

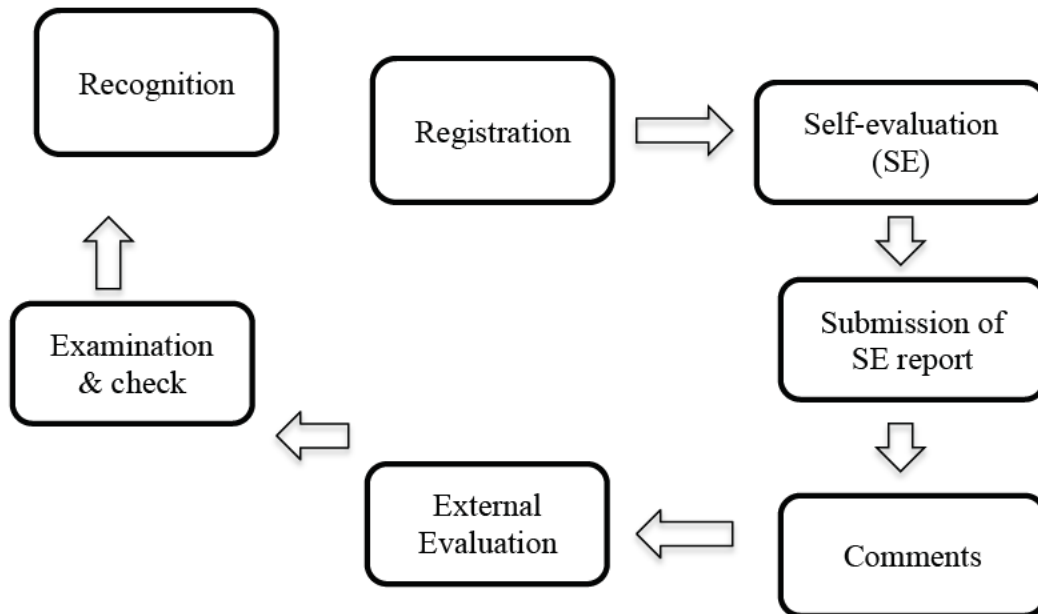


Source: Pham Xuan Thanh (2015, p. 7)

Figure 4.2: Overview of quality assurance procedures in Vietnamese universities

It is clear that the use of both IQA and EQA processes can enhance higher education institutional improvements and create positive images for the institutions in the outside world. The EQA process is fully supported in terms of quality assurance resources from government for the universities.

In addition, Decision No. 29/2008/BGDĐT was published by MoET in 2008 and incorporates guided accreditation steps for Vietnamese universities. These steps are summarised in Figure 4.3.



Source: Pham Xuan Thanh (2015, p. 8)

Figure 4.3: Procedural steps of quality assurance accreditation in Vietnamese universities

In summary, although Vietnam had set standards for higher education accreditation, it did not yet have a “Qualification Framework” yet because the process of developing the higher education management performance indicator system was still underway. Vietnam is still regarded as a developing country with a low level of competitiveness in higher education and technologies, and lacks capital investment for education development, compared to many other countries in the world (MoET, 2014e). It has been widely recognised that the quality assurance system at the national level is still facing such as lack of a national quality assurance framework and inadequate quality assurance resources, which may have an impact on the development and implementation of quality assurance in higher education (Madden, 2014). Therefore, the quality of teaching, learning and research in higher education still has many challenges in meeting international standards. Improvement around quality assurance in higher education is a necessity for enhancing Vietnamese higher education standards, and remediation is likely to take some time. Within this national narrative, I now consider in detail the quality assurance system at the U-VN.

4.3.2 Quality assurance system at the U-VN

The U-VN has a quality assurance system and procedures to promote education quality. The quality assurance system includes five key areas of activities: governance, planning and review, policies and procedures, stakeholder feedback and evaluation criteria for university activities. The key areas concerned are presented below.

4.3.2.1 Governance structures

As previously discussed, the Vietnamese university quality assurance system is made up of two key components and responsibilities for quality assurance procedures are shared between MoET and the Quality Assurance Centre Institution at each university. However, within the national higher education institution of interest here, U-VN had three main governance bodies, namely: The Department of Testing and Education Quality Accreditation (DTEQA)-MoET, the Institute of Education Quality Assurance (IEQA)-VN and the Quality Assurance Centre (QAC)-U-VN. The role of each body is presented in the following paragraphs.

DTEQA: This body is an independent statutory authority established by MoET in 2012. DTEQA regulates and assures the quality of Vietnam's large, diverse and complex higher education sector. It registers and evaluates the performance of higher education providers against the Vietnamese Higher Education Standards (MoET, 2016).

IEQA: This body was established in 1995 under the umbrella of a national higher education institution (VN, 2015b). The IEQA provides the quality assurance strategies, policies, and scientific services to help the university within VN conduct quality assurance assessment and accreditation, and delivers postgraduate programs and training workshops in related professional areas. The IEQA also serves as an office for consultation and assistance by the national higher education institution's President in leadership and management of quality assurance, university governance and education development and quality assessment and accreditation at the institution. Additionally, as the permanent office for the national higher education institution's Accreditation Council, the coordinating activities in quality assurance and education

accreditation within IEQA are conducted under the supervision of the national higher education institution.

The QAC: This body was established by U-VN in 2009. The QAC plays an important role advising the U-VN Rector Board and institution about developing and implementing quality assurance plans. The quality assurance leads the self-evaluation performance (U-VN, 2016a).

Although, there are three main quality assurance governance bodies, the regulation and management in Vietnam is shouldered by the central organisation DTEQA only and both IEQA and quality assurance work occur under its supervision. With the new demands for quality assurance from all relevant stakeholders, it is likely that DTEQA, as the sole manager of quality assurance, will be unable to meet this demand. In addition, with more than 500 higher education institutions in Vietnam, DTEQA lacks time and adequate facilities to function effectively and efficiently (Madden, 2014). It is also difficult to guarantee that their conclusions are appreciated and rigorous.

Under the supervision of these quality assurance institutions, strategic planning and review of the quality assurance system had been suggested within U-VN, a discussion of this is presented next section.

4.3.2.2 Quality assurance strategic planning and review

Van Damme (2002) notes that quality assurance planning in universities is the set of elements that combine with other plans within an institution to develop quality assurance objectives and actively communicate standards for developing indicators. The quality assurance plan also sets requirements for the threshold data to be collected to monitor compliance with the set standards and apply solutions to improve education. U-VN's strategic planning system and strategic planning review are presented below.

Strategic planning system: A strategic planning system is essential for quality assurance development in a university to enable implementation of a plan by the cascading of the mission, vision, goals and objectives of quality assurance (Shawyun,

2010). Within the umbrella of the national institution, the U-VN mission statement allowed for a diversification of mission between the six university members of the institution and for the evolution of each individual university's mission and strategy. The mission of each university was a statement that defined their position in the education landscape and highlighted the specific roles they wished to play. In other words, the overall impression is that the mission statements of each university within VN showed the role of the university and what it might look like in the near future. This is indeed the case with the university mission statement in Vietnam and the context of the 21st century (VN, 2013).

U-VN's vision statement places U-VN towards the end of the 2020s as a research university with international standards that delivers specialised training for both the region and the world (AU, 2015e). The vision statement highlighted the importance of planning and achieving suitable long-term development through higher education (European University Association [EUA], 2005). The vision statement was necessary for U-VN development. It also helped the U-VN to build strategic plans for medium or long-term development.

In order to realise the university vision statement, there are several tasks that the U-VN has established. These include providing high-quality teachers and educational managers and resources that match local, regional and international standards, researching the fields of educational science and educational management and encouraging international cooperation in training and scientific research, scientific exchange and technological transfer (U-VN, 2016b).

In addition, three major value systems support enhancing quality assurance: (1) To build the culture of an organisation in which all members are willing to share, and willing to work hard for the organization, (2) To strive for quality, efficiency and professionalism all activities, and (3) To be committed to fairness among members, including students of the school (AU, 2015c).

Strategic planning review: The strategic planning review promoted the U-VN's missions and goals to reinforce U-VN's vision and philosophy. Like all Vietnamese universities, U-VN has adopted internal and external reviews which have been

undertaken every five years in accordance with DTEQA (Hayden & Thiep, 2015). The quality assurance planning review within U-VN focused on an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of U-VN and the strategic directions, objectives, and responsibilities with clear timeframes.

As for many universities in Vietnam, the key purposes of each review were to describe the status in each area with regard to ten standards and sixty-three criteria as published by MoET and the standards of VN (VN, 2013). Based on analysing data from student and stakeholder feedback, U-VN identified the strengths and weaknesses in terms of each standard and the relative success of action plans or suggests what needs to be improved to address any issues.

The strategic planning review was conducted in each functional office, department and centre and across all training programs within the U-VN. The Rector, the Department Head and academic team leaders engaged in continuous monitoring of their current performance under the standards of the quality assurance. All of the quality assurance activities were undertaken and monitored by the QAC or the Chair of the Quality Assurance Self-evaluation committees at the U-VN. Under the mission, vision, goals and objectives of U-VN, all academic leaders and academic staff were required to develop a protocol about quality in their institution and training programs before each academic year begins (VN, 2015c).

The U-VN had developed and published various quality assurance policies over the years to promote quality assurance performance. The significant policies and procedures are outlined in the next section.

4.3.2.3 Quality assurance policies and procedures

The U-VN has policies and procedures to manage teaching, learning, research and other university activities. An online search on the university's website for the current quality assurance policies at the U-VN revealed that most of the quality assurance policies and guidelines were authored by VN, with some authored by U-

VN and MoET. This section highlights relevant quality assurance policies and procedures within U-VN based on this search.

Assurance policies: Information on the university's website about quality assurance policies at U-VN showed that in addition to the quality assurance planning and review, some quality assurance policies have been published over time. The policies and procedures of the U-VN contribute wholly, or in part, to quality assurance, quality improvement and compliance relevant to internal and external standards. Responsibilities for the implementation of policies and procedures were identified in the relevant documentation through the specifications of the U-VN's QAC. The policies were published and updated regularly in response to current contexts (VN, 2015c). Some significant policies were introduced in the period from 2009 to 2015. Firstly, the Regulations on Quality Assurance Activities of University Education was published from 2010 onwards (VN, 2015c). This policy defined and established the roles for managing the quality assurance, and promoted systematic monitoring and improvement of quality assurance within U-VN. It also addressed the quality assurance for each institution. Secondly, the Self-evaluation Guidelines for Quality Education Program was published in 2011 (VN, 2013). The purpose of this policy was to specify accreditation requirements for program self-evaluation activities for each university member of the national university. The policy provided the specific stages of self-evaluation. Finally, the Course Review Policy was published in 2016 and it guided the student feedback aims and processes.

Quality assurance procedures: The delivery of U-VN's quality assurance system was undertaken through annual plans that enabled priorities to be located. Such flexibility was responsive to the aspirations and ambitions within the university. It also allowed the university to demonstrate a measure of agility and creativity in relation to changing external and internal demands in a dynamic broader national context.

The quality assurance procedures at U-VN clearly reflected the attention and commitment of the highest levels of leadership of the national university for quality assurance activities. At the U-VN level, a Vice-Rector was directly in charge of quality assurance and leadership, as well as being the representative for the quality of the whole school. A Quality Assurance Board with six full-time members was established

in 2007. To support the Quality Assurance Board at the U-VN level, a Quality Assurance Board was also established in each faculty. For implementation of quality assurance at U-VN the following quality assurance actions can be carried out:

- Undertaking assessment and monitoring of academic honesty,
- Monitoring academic staff performance against quality assurance standards,
- Responding to quality assurance internal reviews,
- Reporting self-evaluation, and
- Making appropriate for standardized course development.

While many of the quality assurance mechanisms discussed above depend on the academic leaders and academic staff within the U-VN, there was also mandatory legislative measures in place that promoted evaluation of the quality assurance system by stakeholders. The following section examines this in detail.

4.3.2.4 Stakeholder feedback

Stakeholder feedback is extremely important and offers guidance for the quality assurance review process (Hayden & Thiep, 2015). The U-VN evaluated and reviewed course delivery and assessment practices to promote reliable evidence of standards. According to the U-VN, the aim of stakeholder feedback was to obtain an in-depth evaluation of academic programs, to review course structure and promote an alignment of learning objectives to learning outcomes, and to review the quality of teaching and learning. There were two important surveys for gaining feedback from the stakeholders: student and employee surveys. Student surveys were conducted regularly and offered valid and reliable feedback from students, while employee surveys were conducted with academic staff and employers of graduates. However, only a few courses or academic programs sought student feedback to maintain course development (VN, 2015c).

The stakeholders' feedback focused on course content, delivery and assessment; the teaching and learning environment; facilities, resources and services to promote the successful delivery of education courses; and, curriculum aims and intended employment outcomes. Data obtained from the stakeholders offered points of both

strength and weakness. The following section discusses the criteria for teaching and learning at the undergraduate level at the U-VN.

4.3.3 Criteria for teaching and learning in undergraduate education

The urgent need to enhance teaching and learning at the U-VN was increasingly recognised. In the competitive global ‘knowledge economy’ and the competition between national universities, much had been done and was being done on educational goals, the teaching criteria, and student assessments at the U-VN.

Educational goals: The literature and current work in universities demonstrates that educational goals can be different between universities because goals are created based on the particular characteristics of each university. The U-VN valued and promoted inclusive, engaging and innovative teaching that provided students with high-quality learning opportunities (VN, 2015c). This means that students were taught by well-qualified academic staff who were effective communicators and collaborators with a passion for enhancing the quality of education and pursuing excellence in teaching and learning pedagogies. Additionally, students will experience curricula that were flexible in learning and assessment applications to meet the needs of diverse learners. Teaching and learning had been a core element of the U-VN since the institution was founded in 2007 (AU, 2015c). Indeed, the academic leaders, staff and students of the university were aware that quality teaching and learning was essential to accomplish the university’s mission, and it should be considered an embedded cultural characteristic of the university.

Teaching and learning criteria: maintenance and enhancement of teaching and learning at U-VN based on the Promulgation of Regulations on Tertiary Education Quality Standards, launched by MoET in 2014 (MoET, 2014c). The document defined sixty-three criteria for training programs in Vietnamese higher education and seven criteria for broader training activities. In general, training program criteria described how to examine the training process and the requirements of high-quality training programs. The requirements are summarised below:

- The training program of the university should be built on the current regulations that are published by MoET.
- Training programs should have clear objectives, be specific, have a reasonable structure, be designed within the quality assurance system, meet the requirements of knowledge standard and skills training for university degrees, and be flexible to meet the demands and needs of all stakeholders.
- Training programs should be regularly updated and adjusted with reference to international advanced programs, including feedback from employers, graduate students, educational institutions and other organisations to meet the human resourcing and economic development needs of the local society and country.
- The training program should be periodically reviewed and implemented with on going quality improvement based on the assessment results (MoET, 2014c).

Based on the foregoing criteria, the training programs at the U-VN should have been consistent with the university's mission, objectives, functions and specific tasks of a university. All programs should meet the requirements of economic development in a country. They should also bear comparison with training programs in other universities around the world. In addition, the training programs were required to be periodically supplemented and adjusted based on many sources of information from students, faculties and employers. The implementation of training programs was based on the training regulations issued by the national higher education institution and U-VN's Rector. The conditions for implementing training programs were intended to guarantee ongoing permanent improvements.

The curricula of the U-VN were periodically, edited and extended by program designers, instructors, and students to international reference standards. Such modifications were made to principally serve the need of industries to meet the training required for human resources in national economic development.

The U-VN organised updated training programs each year to increase or decrease the range of program modules to fit with the training models and regulations of MOET. With a view to ensuring high standards, advice from many participants such as

specialist discipline advisors, training managers, current students, graduate students, colleagues inside and outside the module and employers were sought.

U-VN's training and ways of implementing diverse programs aimed to meet the multiple learning objectives and the needs of society (VN, 2015c). The managers of all programs were to promote that the training process based on scientific and practically evidenced criteria.

Student assessment criteria: Student assessment is one of the most important elements of teaching and learning processes. The outcomes of such assessment have always had a profound effect on a student's future career (Asia University Network Quality Assurance (AUN) (AUN, 2015). It also provides valuable information for the university about the effectiveness of the teaching and learning processes. According to the U-VN, student assessment was an important part of improving the quality of teaching programs because the method for assessing students assessment affects both teaching and learning approaches (VN, 2015c). According to the Promulgation of Regulations on Tertiary Education Quality Standards (MoET, 2014c), student assessment criteria were expected to be:

- regularly conducted following the academic year and incorporate all units,
- flexible in training reform from traditional training styles to training credit systems but these should be flexible and appropriate to create favorable conditions for learners,
- focused on innovative teaching and learning methods, and methods of learning assessment. Assessment methods should cover the capacity of learners to develop effective study habits, independent study, and work in groups, and
- incorporate learner's cumulative knowledge, practical skills and the capacity to detect and resolve problems.

The form and criteria for student assessment in each module was recorded in the module outline so that students were directed well in the learning processes. Basically, the requirements of each assessment were varied and matched each module objective. Clarifying assessments in each module also developed the

thinking of students, thus encouraging students in the learning process. The U-VN adopted regular scheduled assessments, including regular assessments, mid-terms and final evaluations. The regular scheduled assessments were created to support a learning plan, and to track and manage the student's progress in the learning process. In addition, assessment feedback was offered in a timely manner to learners. The following section analyses the monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirement processes that U-VN was applying.

4.3.4 Monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements

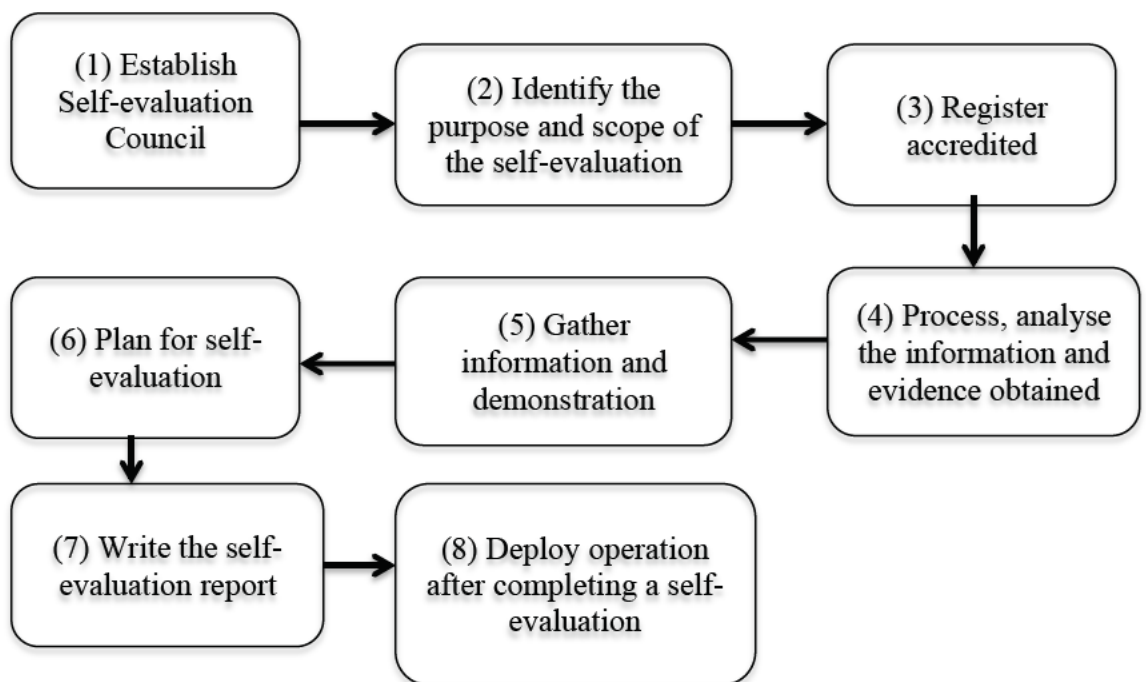
Monitoring quality assurance may be defined as “an ongoing process by which stakeholders obtain regular feedback on the progress being made towards goals and objectives” (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2009, p. 8). Monitoring is an important source of information for quality assurance evaluation.

Like many Vietnamese universities, U-VN had a set of proposed prescriptions: (1) a national independent coordinating body (agency) with legal status aimed at directly guaranteeing the quality assessment system; (2) self-evaluation by the university implemented by quality assurance monitoring personnel through academic processes; (3) external evaluation by peer-review as well as by external experts; and (4) publication of regular self-evaluation reports within Vietnam and beyond to establish confidence and reliability (Madden, 2014). The self-evaluation applies the criteria for higher education in Vietnam as published by MoET. However, at the program level, since 2014, U-VN has begun applying the criteria for internal quality assurance offered by the Asia University Network Quality Assurance (AUN) in some courses (VN, 2013).

According to the Regulations on Quality Accreditation at the U-VN in 2007 (U-VN, 2015), the purpose of self-evaluation within U-VN were not only to construct and develop skills in quality management across all of the university's activities, but also to build awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the university, faculties, departments and personnel. Self-evaluation had an important role to play promoting planning and training quality, and adjusting the target for the next phase in the university's direction to promote the successful implementation of the university's mission. Furthermore, self-evaluation demonstrated autonomy and self-responsibility

in all training activities, scientific research, social service functions and assigned tasks in accordance with the mission and goals of the university.

The methods of quality assurance evaluation were based on the standards required by the national higher education institution’s perception about quality assurance, that is “quality is the satisfaction of employers and meeting the requirements of human society as well” (U-VN, 2015, p. 1). For each criterion in each higher education standard, the university conducted a review in accordance with the following methods: (1) gathering information; (2) getting feedback from the participant involved; (3) describing to clarify the status of cases under each criterion; (4) analysing in a comparative context the strengths and shortcomings from which the final self-evaluation statements are derived; and, (5) developing action plans to improve quality, which specify the time, resources, and methods for implementation. The process of self-evaluation followed eight stages at U-VN, which are summarised in Figure 4.4.



Source: VN (2015c, p. 17).

Figure 4.4: Quality assurance self-evaluation report procedures at the U-VN

4.4 Summary of case study themes

There are some significant points that need to be addressed in this quality assurance narrative at U-VN. Firstly, the U-VN had developed an integrated framework for quality assurance that was intended to be an effective contribution to university development. Owing to the requirements of Vietnamese quality assurance in higher education and the university's circumstances, self-evaluation was currently the main quality assurance activity. Self-evaluation was required to discover and enhance quality in the institution generally and at the course level. In addition, the ultimate aim that underpinned this quality assurance system was the university's commitment to producing the best possible experience for students.

Secondly, over the years, some quality assurance policies covering all undergraduate and graduate programs have been published within the U-VN. These policies included an appropriate mechanism to review interdisciplinary programs. There were also some policies related to improving academic programs within U-VN that had been published (VN, 2015c).

Thirdly, in the existing quality assurance framework, the IQA process at the U-VN was considered a foundation for the continuing development of quality assurance. The U-VN saw quality assurance as the most important part of being a self-critical academic community that evaluates and enhances its quality assurance procedures. U-VN had also modified many aspects of its quality assurance policies and procedures to promote best practice internally and across the sector, and the U-VN was committed to further changes and enhancement in the future. The key principles, together with the management procedures published on their webpages, were important for guiding staff in their endeavor to promote award standards and a highly recognised quality student experience. The following section provides a brief description of the quality assurance narrative at the SOE-AU as a second case study, and then provides a summary of the two case studies.

Part 2 School of Education case study in Australia

4.5 Case study context

This part will document and discuss the quality assurance system at the SOE-AU using a range of relevant policies and documents. Firstly, it is necessary to describe the SOE-AU location, infrastructure and the governance structure. Secondly, an overview of quality assurance at both national and institutional levels is explored. Finally, how the quality assurance system at SOE-AU implemented is considered.

4.5.1 Location and infrastructure

The regional university in New South Wales, Australia (AU): This place was well known for providing a diverse city and rural environment in a sub-tropical highland area with four distinct seasons (Armidale, 2016). Students may enjoy both lifestyle and academic learning opportunities when studying at the AU. According to AU (2015d),

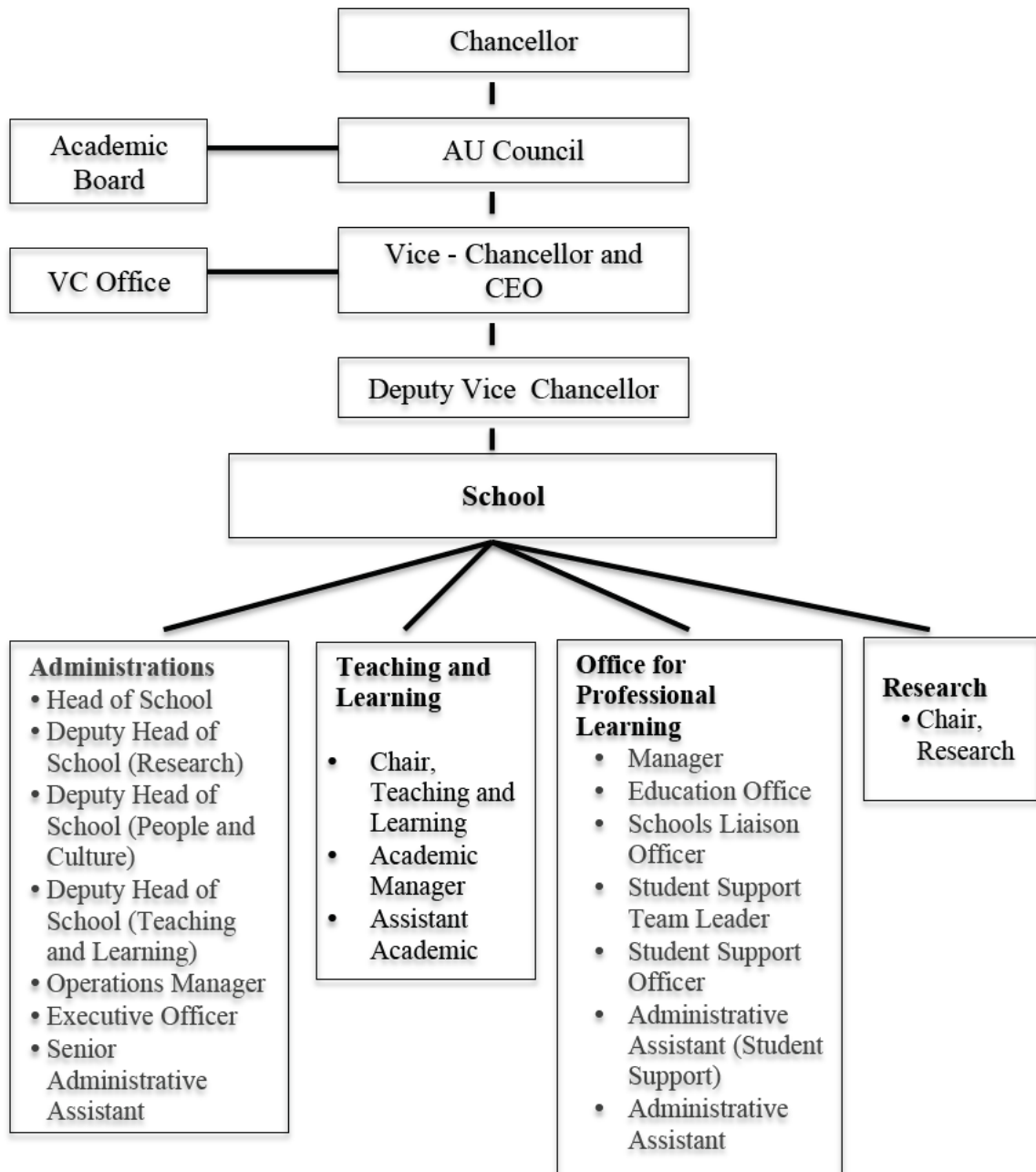
Students will enjoy a healthy and active lifestyle with access to top sporting facilities and cultural delights all for a fraction of metropolitan cost students would expect to pay in a major city. On-campus students enjoy close interaction with University's academic staff and students. This experience is facilitated by University's vibrant collegiate community, providing networks of friends, academic support, social and sporting activities (p.1).

The AU had ten academic schools: Arts; Behavioral; Cognitive and Social Sciences; Environmental and Rural Science; Law; Health; Humanities; Rural Medicine; Science and Technology; Business School; Graduate School of Business; and the School of Education.

4.5.2 Establishment and governance structure

The AU was the first Australian university established outside a capital city and was formed in 1938. The SOE-AU, was one of the academic schools of the AU. The SOE-AU mainly focused on early childhood, primary and secondary teacher

education. The SOE-AU provided a variety of courses for on-campus students and a wide range of distance education courses to Australian and international students. The SOE-AU had academic staff with high quality of experiences in both on and off-campus modes of course delivery (U-AU, 2016). For instance, all courses provided were informed by research to meet the needs of the real world and to maintain relevance to the specific needs of each organisation to enhance learner employment and promotion prospects. In the field of education, the SOE-AU was the largest provider of initial Teacher Education Courses in Australia. The governance structure of the SOE-AU is summarised in Figure 4.5.



Source: AU (2015d, p. 17)

Figure 4.5: The governance structure of SOE-AU

4.5.3 Human resources and recent developments

As the SOE-AU was the largest school within the AU, it offered a very broad range of study opportunities. In 2015, the SOE-AU had about 4,679 students. Enrolments made up 22.2% the total of the AU student enrolment (AU, 2016h). In the university case study, students chose studies across twelve subject areas: Contextual Study in Education; Creative Performing Arts Education; Early Childhood Education; English, Literacies and Language; Health, Physical and Sports Studies Education; Information & Communication Technology Education; Learning and Teaching; Mathematics Education; Education; Social Science Education; and, Special and Inclusive Education. All areas contributed to degrees at Bachelor, Master and Doctoral level. As of the AU's 2016 statistics, the SOE-AU had a total of 117 academic leaders and academic staff (AU, 2016f).

4.6 Quality assurance narrative in the Australian higher education and at the SOE-AU

The following section reviews the quality assurance narrative in Australian higher education and the quality assurance system at the SOE-AU.

4.6.1 Quality assurance narrative in Australian higher education

As in many developed countries, Australia has a long history of efforts to improve quality assurance in higher education. Australian universities have always been concerned with maintaining and improving standards. Quality assurance in Australia's higher education sector and individual institutions is based on strong partnerships between the federal government, state and territory governments, and the university sector in general. With the expansion of the university sector in the 1970s, and late-1980s, it was no longer possible to strive for quality informally and Australian Government employed the British 'gold standard' as the benchmark of excellence. Since the 1970s the Australian Government has encouraged universities to critically monitor their own performance. The improvement in efficiency and effectiveness and an increased awareness of public accountability were sharpened during the 1980s. During the mid-1980s, the Commonwealth published major

discipline reviews to define standards and to improve quality and efficiency in Australian higher education (Shah et al., 2011). In 1991, there were significant changes in the Commonwealth's policies from a discipline-based approach to a whole institution quality assurance approach evidenced by policies, focusing on the quality of teaching and research. Then, in 1992, the Commonwealth established the Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. The tasks of this committee were to (1) provide advice on quality assurance issues, (2) conduct independent audits of institutional quality assurance policies, and (3) make recommendations about the allocation of annual quality-related funds (Shah et al., 2011).

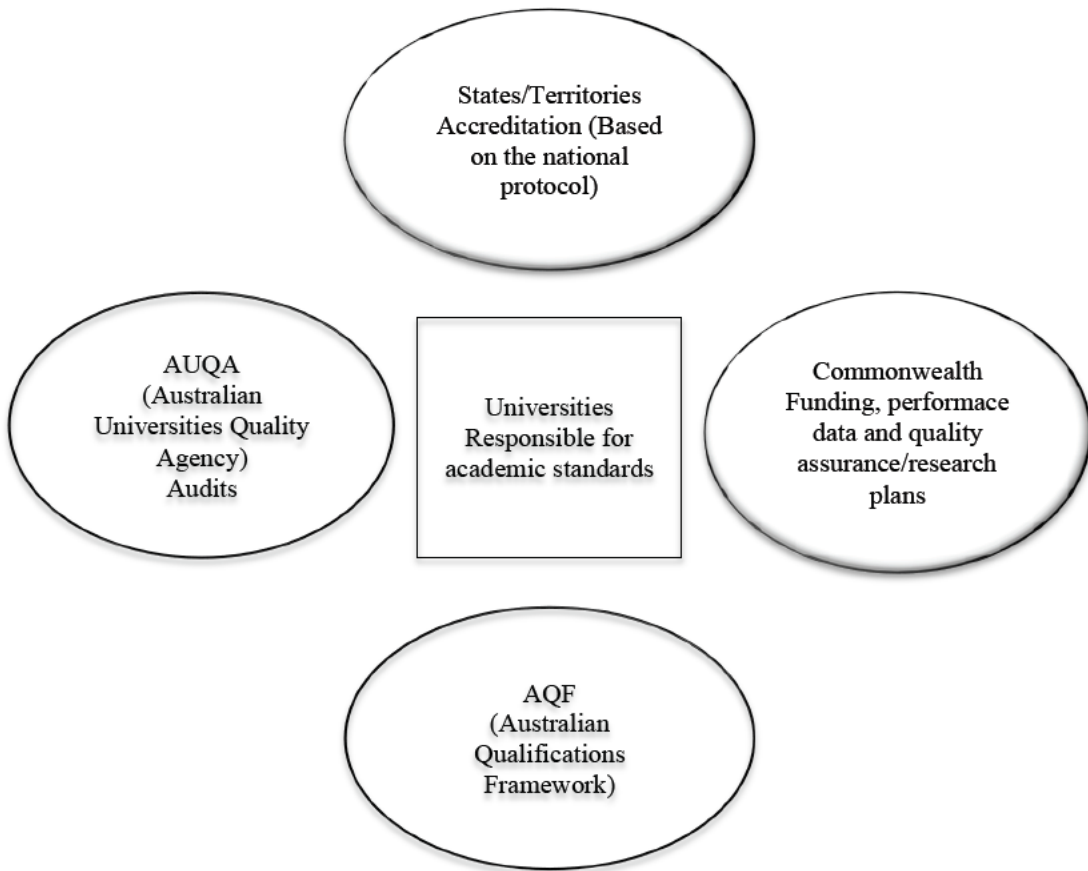
Six years later, in 1998 the Australian University Quality Agency (AUQA) was established. As an independent agency on quality assurance, it is required to provide objective, fair, and accurate reporting of universities auditing and self-accreditation. Although quality assurance began work in 2001, the initial round of auditing of all Australian universities was not completed until mid-2007. Both external and internal quality assurance reports are regularly published in all Australian universities.

In 2011, the Australian Government established the Tertiary Education and Standard Agency (TEQSA) as the new national body for higher education regulation and quality assurance (Tertiary Education and Standard Agency [TEQSA], 2016). In the same year, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 was established and the second edition published in December 2014. The aim of this policy was to provide the agency with evidence of the new national regulatory and quality assurance environment for Australian higher education institutions.

The second edition of the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) was adopted in January 2013 (AG, 2016b). The AQF is the national policy for regulating qualifications in the Australian education and training system. The AQF promotes consistent standards across Australia by implementing standards for registration, category and course accreditation standards, qualification standards, and standards for teaching and learning, research and information (AQF, 2016).

The national, state and territory governments all play important roles in providing public funding to Australian universities and overseeing quality and accountability

reviews, and require all universities to report annually. The current Australian Quality Assurance Framework is summarised in Figure 4.6.



Source: Mahood, Sid, and Mark (2011, p. 477)

Figure 4.6: Australian Quality Assurance in Higher Education Framework

The next section analyses the quality assurance framework that the SOE-AU is applying.

4.6.2 Quality assurance system at the SOE-AU

The AU, was known nationally and internationally as an institution with high-quality teaching and learning environments (AU, 2016g). The AU quality assurance system was closely based on the Australian national quality assurance system that includes the development of annual quality assurance reports and improvement plans. The Good Universities Guide was released in 2016 and this regionally based university was

awarded full marks for student experience and graduate outcomes. In addition, the university was in the top 20 per cent of all Australian universities endorsed by top scores in the supporting categories of overall quality of educational experience, teaching quality, learner engagement, learning resources and student support (Good Education Group, 2016).

As one of the schools within AU, the SOE-AU had implemented key areas of activities that comprise a quality assurance system such as governance, planning, review, policies, procedures, evaluation criteria and stakeholder feedback for school activities. These key areas are described below.

4.6.2.1 Governance

Governance was made up of four quality assurance agencies: the Australian Qualification Framework Council (AQFC), the Australian Government (AG), the state and territory governments (STG) and the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA).

The AQFC incorporated the quality assured qualifications from certificates at secondary level through to bachelor and up to doctoral degrees to promote a comprehensive qualifications framework nationally. The framework also promotes lifelong learning and a diverse education and training system.

The AG was concerned with university governance, which is managed through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). The DEEWR had the task of providing public funding to Australian universities and overseeing a range of quality and accountability requirements. Every year, DEEWR provided a document called the “Institution Assessment Framework Portfolio”. It supported each Australian university to conduct an annual overarching confidential assessment. This document summarized institutional achievements using quantitative and qualitative data received from universities and other sources. This assessment is a starting point for strategic planning, funding, and bilateral discussions between the DEEWR and each university institution.

STG also played an important role in requiring all universities in their jurisdiction to write an annual report. The annual report reviewed and evaluated all university activities. At the University-case study, the New South Wales State government was the relevant body.

The TEQSA was an independent, not-for-profit national agency established to promote audits and reports on quality assurance across Australian higher education institutions. TEQSA implemented external audits in each Australian university. The mission of TEQSA was to investigate the extent to which the university institutions were achieving their missions and objectives. TEQSA's assessment focused on teaching and learning, research and management, including each institution's overseas activities. It also investigates the university's success regarding the Australian higher education standards (2016). The summary of higher education standards offered by TEQSA is detailed in Table 4.1.

Another contribution to the quality assurance framework in Australian universities was the Accreditation of Professional Programs (APP). The APP worked with the relevant professional organisations such as the Australian Medical Council, the state nursing boards, the Institution of Engineers Australia, the accounting bodies, the education departments, teacher unions and professional bodies such as the Australian College of Education and the Australian Council for Educational leaders. Finally, a range of public information about Australia's higher education contributed to enabling students and employers to make informed decisions.

In summary, the AU shared the responsibilities for quality assurance with the government's higher education independent quality audit agency and the AQF Council. The Ministerial Council of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) oversees all components within the Australian framework. This comprised relevant ministers from the Australian Government and the six states and two territories of Australia. The following section discusses and critiques the quality assurance strategic planning and review process within the AU.

Table 4.1 Higher education standards framework

Higher Education Standards Framework standard	Column 2 Provider Registration	Column 3 Provider Category	Column 4 Course Accreditation	Column 5 Qualification
Part A: Standards for Higher Education				
1. Student Participation and Attainment				
1.1 Admission	✓		✓	
1.2 Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning	✓		✓	
1.3 Orientation and Progression	✓		✓	
1.4 Learning Outcomes and Assessment			✓	
1.5 Qualifications and Certification			✓	✓
2. Learning Environment				
2.1 Facilities and Infrastructure	✓		✓	
2.2 Diversity and Equity	✓		✓	
2.3 Wellbeing and Safety	✓		✓ (only if regulation under the <i>Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000</i> is required)	
2.4 Student Grievances and Complaints	✓			
3. Teaching				
3.1 Course Design			✓	
3.2 Staffing	✓		✓	
3.3 Learning Resources and Educational Support	✓		✓	
4. Research and Research Training				
4.1 Research	✓ (according to provider's circumstances)		✓	
4.2 Research Training			✓ (if applicable to the provider)	

Table 4.1 (continued)

5. Institutional Quality Assurance				
5.1 Course Approval and Accreditation	✓		✓	
5.2 Academic and Research Integrity	✓			
5.3 Monitoring, Review and Improvement	✓		✓	
5.4 Delivery with Other Parties	✓ (if applicable to the provider)		✓ (if applicable to the provider)	
6. Governance and Accountability				
6.1 Corporate Governance	✓			
6.2 Corporate Monitoring and Accountability	✓		✓ (6.2.1i only)	
6.3 Academic Governance				
7. Representation, Information and Information Management				
7.1 Representation	✓		✓	
7.2 Information for Prospective and Current Students	✓		✓	
7.3 Information Management	✓		✓	
Part B: Criteria for Higher Education Providers				
B1 Classification of Higher Education Providers	✓	✓		
B2 Authority for Self-Accreditation of Courses of Study			✓ (if applicable to the provider)	

Note: (a) the Provider registration standards (column 2), (b) the provider category standards (column 3), (c) the Provider course accreditation standards (column 4), and (d) the Qualification standards (Column 5).

Source: AG (2016a, p. 2).

4.6.2.2 Quality assurance strategic planning and review

Quality management within the AU was embedded in the strategic, operational planning and review processes across the University.

Quality assurance strategic planning: According to the AU’s strategic plan for 2016 to 2020 (AU, 2016g, p. 5), “We will have a diverse funding base in order to guarantee excellent in teaching, learning, research and innovation”. In order to do that, the AU

focused on six strategies: deliver excellent research with high impact, deliver an outstanding student experience, diversify and grow income, build dominance, improve operational resilience and create a bold and innovative culture.

In addition, there were five major values supported within the university. Firstly, providing a study and work environment to encourage intellectual and personal development, and flexibility in terms of attitude, knowledge and skills. Secondly, the AU encourages and respects the diversity of students, staff and partners. Thirdly, the AU provides an academic and work environment that is accessible to, and engaged with the communities served. Fourth, the AU creates a culture that responds to change and the needs and expectations of all stakeholders. Finally, the AU is committed to promote a culture that develops and incorporates creative approaches to academic and administrative service delivery across all areas of the AU (AU, 2015d) Values and enduring beliefs are important because they have major influence on the university culture, individual actions and the guidelines overall.

The strategy within the AU included providing data and analysis to inform and support effective decision-making and quality assurance processes throughout the AU. It also facilitated compliance reporting activities, institutional surveys, internal policies development, reviews, Higher Education Participation Program (HEPP) administration and co-ordination of Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA) reporting.

The AU's strategy was, therefore, important for setting a corresponding mission for all schools within the AU. Without strategy, the AU could not examine whether the university had been able to achieve what it attempted to do, and AU's strategy also helped each faculty within the university institution (UNESCO, 2014c). However, the literature review on strategic planning showed that most researchers agree that any strategic plan must consider the nature of the organisation (Bryson, 1998). Although the particular strategy of SOE-AU was not defined in the institution's missions and values, as an independent university and the academic schools of the AU, the SOE-AU provided on their website the school characteristics and educational tasks. SOE-AU highlighted the specific role that they wished to play in

order to be valid for changing contexts during the 21st century, especially in the face of international challenges and globalisation processes.

Strategic planning review: A strategic planning review was an essential component of the quality assurance management system within the university (AU, 2015a). The university strategic plan establishes the vision for the AU and priorities areas to work towards, accompanied by action and implementation plans that were systematically reviewed and measured. The strategic planning review operated on a five-year cycle and involved annual monitoring of quality assurance goals and strategies against top-down outcomes. According to the AU protocol statement in 2013, the quality assurance procedures and improvement programs must include both internal and external evaluations (AU, 2016a).

Overall, accountability for implementing the strategic planning review and its strategies rested with the Vice-Chancellor and the executive management of the university under the direction of the University Council. The key areas of internal assessment included monitoring of internal audit activity and periodic reviews of performance through self-evaluation. The self-evaluation process was undertaken by academic staff within the University who had sufficient knowledge and skills to respond and time to conduct internal audit practices. In addition, the development of strategic plans within AU occurred through implementation of a range of subsidiary plans for action in particular areas such as teaching and learning. National quality assurance agencies, independent reviewers or review teams from outside the university conducted external assessments. External assessments were to be conducted at least once every five years after the university's quality assurance self-report had been undertaken. In the next section, the quality policies and procedures within the SOE-AU are presented.

4.6.2.3 Quality policies and procedures

Quality policies and procedures are reflected in the delivering of quality training and assessment and are adapted to client needs as required by each university. In the following section the characteristics of the quality policies and procedures at the SOE-AU are presented.

Quality policies: The quality assurance policies at the AU encompassed quality assurance enhancement, monitoring, and review of processes that supported best practice in complying with higher education quality standards within the national regulatory framework (AU, 2016a). Quality assurance policies had been established to guide the quality assurance processes that focused on the delivery of products and services. They also guided meeting the requirements of students, employers, industry and stakeholders and were implemented within a state-wide collaborative framework that included institutes and central support units (AU, 2016g). These significant policies are presented below.

Firstly, the policies for quality assurance at the AU encompassed all areas of university endeavour and activity, including: corporate and academic governance, university management, learning, teaching and research environment, research, external engagement and environment and university information, communications, marketing and promotion (AU, 2016b). The AU had established quality processes to review and monitor teaching and learning processes along with quality assurance strategies in research and community extension development.

Some significant policies were introduced during the period from 2009 to 2015, including the Academic Quality Management established in 2009 (AU, 2016b). The purpose of the policy was to define and establish the University's approach to managing the quality of academic activities, and to promote systematic monitoring and improvement of teaching and learning policies, procedures and activities. The policy also informed a process to address the strengths and weaknesses of all courses or units by using annual enhancement plans. 'A course review' and 'a school review' were significant activities required by the policy. In-depth evaluation of an academic course was a significant requirement. Evaluation addressed course structure, alignment of learning objectives, learning outcomes and quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The evaluation was undertaken by relevant professional employer groups and student feedback. A whole school review was conducted by the periodic assessment of a school's academic performance and academic activities. In addition, student evaluation surveys were one of the most important parts of an Academic Quality Review.

Secondly, in 2010, the Academic Program Approval Policy was established. The aim of this policy was to provide a framework for the formal approval of all academic course programs within the university. This policy ensured that the development and continuity of quality academic programs aligned with the university's academic aims and strategic plan objectives. The policy applies to a new course development, existing courses and withdrawal of a course, as well as new unit development and changes to units or deletion of units.

Thirdly, the establishment of the Academic Quality Assurance Policy in July 2012 marked specific accreditation standards for university self-evaluation, external evaluation and approval. The aim of this policy was to formalise the broad content of, and appropriate signatories to, formal university academic records to ensure they aligned with the requirements of the AQF 2011 and the TEQSA. The policy supported continuous institutional improvement in relation to the quality of teaching, learning and research (AU, 2016b). However, the university also set down criteria for formal academic records aligned with national quality assurance policies. The aim of specifying formal academic criteria standards was to adjust to the university context and mission.

As well as these policies as described above, there were also other significant policies that supported quality assurance in academic programs, including the Academic Assessment Appeals Policy, the Academic Assessment Appeals Procedures, the Academic Promotion Policy, the Academic Promotion Procedures, and so on. The general purpose of these policies was to promote the highest reputation for the integrity of the university's teaching and research.

Quality assurance procedures: The University Council was accountable to the Australian Government, the state government of NSW, and the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) for quality assurance and compliance with higher education standards within the AU (AU, 2016b). The quality assurance procedures were organised as outlined below.

At the university level, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) had responsibility for monitoring the commitment to quality throughout the university to ensure the

provision of high-quality teaching and student learning outcomes. She/he also promoted a quality culture of excellence in teaching and learning, provides a distinctive student experience and regularly reviewed academic policies and procedures through Academic Board.

At the school level, the Head of School had overall responsibility and accountability for academic programs hosted by the school. The Chair of a school's Teaching and Learning Committee has an immediate responsibility, under the direction of the Head of School, for overseeing teaching and learning and academic programs through the school's Teaching and Learning Committee.

The Chair of Teaching and Learning assumed a leadership and decision-making role and helped lead the school in developing and promoting attractive units and courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels in online and on-campus modes.

The School Academic Manager was responsible for a range of duties that underpinned academic program management and quality assurance within the school. The tasks were to promote efficiency and effectiveness of the school's academic operations and provide expert advice and support to the Head of School, the Chair of the Teaching and Learning Committee and Course Coordinators.

At the course level, the Course Coordinator was responsible for course leadership with regard to the quality of the course, such as compliance, enhancement and student management. The Course Coordinator wrote annual reports to develop and promote attractive units and courses. The role supported increasing student enrolments and completions and assisted with enhancing the learning experience for students. The role required an ability and willingness to work constructively and collegially in support of the strategic and operational direction of both the school and the university.

Unit Coordinators were also responsible to the Head of School for coordination of the preparation, delivery, and assessment of their units. They played a critical role in ensuring the high-quality learning experiences the university is recognised for and ensuring relevant course learning outcomes were realised.

Teaching and Learning Support (TLS) provided the AU staff with the pedagogical and technical support they needed to continue to develop a rich learning environment for students.

In addition, the university also required all academic schools, divisions and their respective sub-units to engage in continuous quality assurance monitoring of their current performance through assistance from the Office of Strategy and Performance if required. The monitoring was ‘embedded’ in regular teaching and learning as ongoing evaluations that were undertaken and reviewed by relevant academic leaders such as the Dean and senior delegate in each academic school or relevant Directors. The purpose of ongoing evaluation was to focus on continuous tracking and improvement of teaching and learning processes, and the academic communities oversaw this process. The outcomes of ‘embedded’ reviews of teaching and learning provided data for more formal reviews.

4.6.2.4 Stakeholder feedback

Stakeholder feedback was an important part of the quality assurance processes within AU. Stakeholder feedback was sought during school and course reviews through surveys and evaluations. According to the Academic Quality Management Policy (2016b, p. 3), a “school review” is a periodic assessment to review the performance of the management and planning in the school. Incorporating a review of the courses was integral to the academic activities of the school. The aim of course review was to refine the course structure and promote an alignment of learning objectives to learning outcomes, and examine the quality of teaching and learning (AU, 2016b).

There were three relevant surveys to gain feedback from the stakeholders: the Australian Graduate Survey, the Beyond Graduate Survey and the University Experience Survey. The aims of the surveys were to collect information on student engagement, teaching quality, resources, support, development and other metrics. The results from the surveys were used to both prove and improve quality learning and teaching and its support at the case study university.

4.6.3 Criteria for teaching and learning in undergraduate education

The setting up of criteria for teaching and learning is an important way to promote the quality of teaching and learning in universities. The following section examines specific teaching and learning criteria at the SOE-AU.

Educational goals: As an academic institution in Australia, the case study university was a public university incorporated under the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 through the Higher Education Standards Framework. These requirements were established under the Educational Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 through The National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007 (National Code 2007). Its first purpose was the teaching and learning goal published as:

AU provides the highest quality learning experience for all students, through the delivery of relevant, future-oriented and quality-assured courses using a teaching and learning model that is built on flexibility, innovation and the creative use of educational technologies (AU, 2016e, p. 1).

More specifically, the AU sought to provide the highest transformative learning experiences so that all students may have high quality, innovative and flexible learning experiences. In addition, the AU also expected their graduates to be global citizens with skills and knowledge to participate successfully in the workforces of diverse societies.

As in all Australian universities, the university case study was an independent and flexible academic institution, so it was free to set its own measures of teaching and learning excellence and determine its own educational goals for each school within the AU.

Unit and course reviews: The review of units and courses aimed to promote the quality of units, courses and schools within the university. These reviews included “unit and course monitoring”, “unit review” and “Course review”(AU, 2016b). The aim of unit and course reviews were in-depth evaluations of academic programs in order to investigate the course and unit structures, learning objectives and learning outcomes in the context of the AU or academic school’s strategic priorities. They

also reviewed the quality of teaching and learning processes, student's assessments, and feedback from students and relevant professional or employer groups.

Unit and course reviews were conducted through data collection, reflection and evaluation processes. The aim of this data collection was to identify reflection on the strengths of each unit and course, and to assist in determining priorities for the improvement of each unit and course. The reviews included data collection for the monitoring of units and courses, which focused on the number of students enrolling in a unit and the number of students withdrawn from the unit after the first day, the first teaching week and the trimester census date. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) reported on unit and course monitoring to the Academic Board on an annually.

The evaluation of units and courses was cyclic, with reporting occurring at the end of each semester/trimester. Discussion of unit and course performance occurred within each school. First, Unit Coordinators presented their unit results and provided initial interpretations to their Head of School. Then, a school report was prepared using unit and course monitoring templates to enable thorough and comprehensive data availability.

Teaching and learning criteria: To promote quality teaching, the AU provided the "Unit and Course Monitoring Procedures" policy which was a tool for assessing standards in learning and teaching. It assisted all lecturers and the Head of School to reflect on every aspect of teaching from management structures, policies and practices to curriculum design and learning support. It was all so be used to encourage conversations between the Academic Board of Teaching and Learning Committee and lecturers. Relevant teaching criteria for courses and units were provided under 'assessment outcome' and 'student feedback'. According to the AU (2015b, p. 3), the criteria for teaching and learning focused on eight points as: (1) clear learning outcomes, (2) learning outcomes achieved, (3) intellectual stimulation, (4) helpful resources provided, (5) constructive feedback received, (6) timely feedback provided, (7) the appropriate amount of work, and (8) overall satisfaction.

In addition, A Framework for High-Quality Professional Experience in NSW Schools applied to the teaching and learning criteria at the SOE-AU. More

specifically, this framework requested particular teaching and learning criteria for all higher education training institutions within the NSW region. There were seven standards that focused on ‘professional knowledge’, ‘professional practice’, and ‘professional engagement’. These are listed below:

- Know students and how they learn,
 - Know the content and how to teach it,
 - Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning,
 - Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environment,
 - Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning,
 - Engage in professional learning, and
 - Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/careers and the community
- (NSW Government, 2015, p. 13).

In addition, the “University Awards for Teaching Excellence” recognized and rewarded excellence in teaching, and this, in turn supported student learning. The teaching awards not only encouraged lecturers to compile evidence of excellence in teaching, but also helped lecturers plan their long-term teaching development. Thus, lecturers at AU were encouraged to strive towards quality teaching and to enhance learning outcomes.

Student assessment criteria: Assessment of student learning was undertaken and useful in the development of educational programs consistent with the institutional mission and goals. Assessment was seen as an opportunity for students to demonstrate their learning and learning processes and the extent to which they had achieved the intended learning outcomes of units or courses. According to University’s *Assessment Procedures* (AU, 2016c, p. 3), the criteria for student assessment focused on three main areas: (1) Each assessment aligns with the requirements of the task and demonstrates the associated learning outcomes; (2) Assessment achievement should meet the student’s personal opportunities, professional requirements and the current industry standards; and, (3) The methods of assessment should be flexible and criterion-referenced. In addition, the timing of assessment required tasks to be early in the teaching periods with students receiving feedback before the next related assessment task. The timing of assessment tasks

throughout a course should be managed so that students could adequately address the tasks and receive feedback before the next task was set or before final examination (AU, 2016d).

4.6.4 Monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements

Quality management was a cyclical system requiring ongoing review and improvement by the university to achieve quality and sustain success. The goal of the quality management system within each school was to promote university-wide formulation of strategies for continuous improvement and quality assurance of academic activities, within the context of the strategic priorities established via the university planning methodology. Quality management was based on the characteristics of the university and the culture of continuous improvement. The quality management system consisted of a four-stage quality cycle: plan, act, evaluate, and improve (AU, 2016b, p. 3). The AU defined these stages as outlined below.

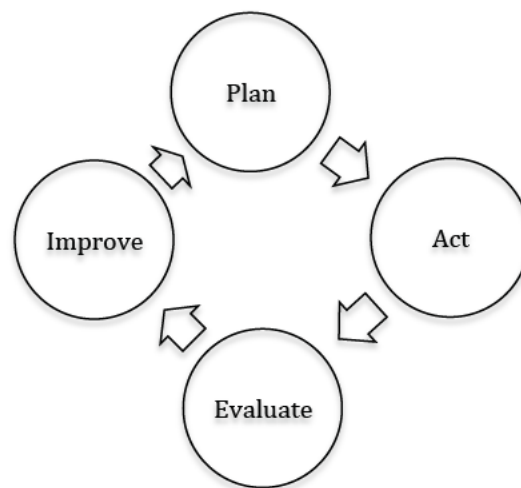
Plan: This stage included all planning related to the quality assurance activities within the university at all levels, such as the university's strategic plans, planning by organisational units, project planning, yearly planning and daily planning. The goals and targets developed were to clearly align with the university's mission and the statements of the organisational units. Considerations by those involved with quality management planning at the university included the analysis of internal and external environments to understand the broader sector and the current market developments. In addition, consideration was also given to the relevant stakeholders to understand their needs and expectations about the outcomes for students.

Act: Such planning would lead to identification of activities that are undertaken to meet objectives, implement plans and produce outcomes.

Evaluate: Assessment and evaluation was conducted through two methods: monitoring and review. The university monitored its performance and progress at all levels to determine the extent to which goals and targets of the university had been achieved. According to the AU, monitoring was a short and medium term activity mainly for management of formative and developmental purposes (AU, 2016b). The

monitoring within the AU used both formal and informal methods to analyze and report data and information to measure and evaluate the university and school performance and progress in achieving their goals or targets. However, within the AU action and monitoring were always developing simultaneously so that each informed the other. The review was a longer term and more formal process that had both formative and summative purposes. The review of quality assurance processes was undertaken by internal and external stakeholders and quality assurance agencies to monitor and measure all of the AU's performance as well as its compliance with relevant Australian higher education standards.

Improve: The AU depended on the results of the evaluation stage to generate improvement goals, which drove its commitment to excellence and innovation. This has led to modification of an existing plan or development of new plans, and thus, the cycle commenced once more. The quality management system at the AU can be summarised as shown in Figure 4.7.



Source: AU (2016b, p. 3).

Figure 4.7: Academic quality management policy

4.7 Summary of case study themes

The analysis of policies and documents shows that the Australian Government has a long history of efforts to improve quality assurance in universities. At the national level, there were four essential quality assurance agencies: AQFC, AG, STG and TEQSA. They played a significant role in publishing quality assurance policies and monitoring the quality assurance procedures in universities. External quality audit was an external quality assurance evaluation method with one cycle every five years. The audit was focused on evaluating the whole quality assurance system implementation in universities.

At the university level, the SOE-AU had proceeded with a comprehensive suite of quality assurance policies that promoted the development of quality assurance strategic plans; monitored teaching, learning and research processes; evaluated educational quality; and, promoted academic performance. There was strong evidence that SOE-AU's quality assurance policies reflected the requirements and expectations of government for quality assurance. Self-evaluation was a regular quality assurance evaluation method used within SOE-AU. There were many methods that had been used in self-evaluation, but student feedback was a critical method to promote quality assurance of teaching and learning within SOE-AU. This offers evidence that the SOE-AU had well-developed processes to track student performance and for students to provide feedback on their experiences, which are benchmarked nationally and internationally. The SOE-AU also used a range of standardised surveys to gather student feedback on their perceptions of teaching and learning experiences in units of study, their overall course experience, and their whole university experience.

4.8 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have discussed the quality assurance narrative of the two case studies. The U-VN, a public tertiary education institution in Vietnam, was the first case study discussed and the SOE-AU in Australia the second case study. The quality assurance system approaches were not new in Australian higher education, as these have been evident since 1989. Vietnam has had quality assurance system approaches in higher education since 2003. It has been widely recognised that the development of quality

assurance systems in universities is of concern at both national and institutional university levels. The adoption of quality assurance systems to promote educational quality was common in both countries. Setting up EQA and IQA processes was a common characteristic of quality assurance procedures and found in the two quality assurance systems in the two case studies. This chapter also identified that external quality audits (Australia) or external assessments (Vietnam) as a tool were conducted by national quality assurance agencies and compulsory for all universities (five-year cycle). The purpose of quality assurance external evaluations in the two quality assurance systems was to strengthen the quality assurance processes. External evaluation was used to examine the implementation of quality assurance activities and determine if related results complied with the university's planned arrangements in accordance with current higher education standards. At the university level, both universities used self-evaluation as a first step to prepare for external evaluation. A variety of policies related to quality assurance had been published within the two university case studies to promote quality assurance strategic plans, teaching, learning, research and evaluating quality assurance processes. The policies at the university level reflected the requirements and expectations of government for quality assurance.

While there was considerable documentation, it is unclear how well these documents met effectiveness and efficiency needs in the context of each institution where the academic leaders and academic staff worked. It is necessary to understand how quality assurance works in the 'real world' in each university. Hence, this research will enquire further by using a series of interviews and questionnaire surveys with academic leaders and academic staff at the two case study sites.

In the next two chapters, I present the results of these interviews and questionnaire surveys for each case study.

Chapter 5 Quality assurance in the university case study in Vietnam: Analysis of interviews and questionnaires

5.1 Introduction

This chapter reports findings from the interviews and questionnaires with leaders and academic staff related to quality assurance in the U-VN. This section brings out participants' perceptions on quality assurance and how quality assurance implementation occurs at the U-VN. The findings in this chapter are based on the second, third and fourth research questions in Chapter 1 (p.7). The data were collected through interviews and questionnaires conducted between June and July 2015. Six academic leaders at U-VN and forty-one academic staff participated, and the breakdown of the profiles of the academic leaders can be found in Table 3 in Chapter 3 (p.69). The methods used for the interview and questionnaire survey data analysis are described in Chapter 3 (p. 71). The procedures and descriptive statistics used in the analysis of the transcriptions are provided in this chapter. Results were treated confidentially and anonymity maintained throughout by the use of pseudonyms for the six academic leaders at U-VN: Rector, Vice Rector, Director of Training Department, Head of the Education Department, Head of Sciences Education, Director of Quality Assurance Department, who were coded as VN-1, VN-2, VN-3, VN-4, VN-5 and VN-6.

The data collected on the seven areas point to interesting patterns, which are the main subject of discussion in this chapter. Section 5.2 of this chapter begins with the discussion of the participants' views on quality assurance conceptions as determined from interviews. The next section discusses quality assurance policies reported by participants. The third section presents the results on the implementation of quality assurance. The fourth section presents the findings regarding quality assurance of teaching, learning and research activities. The findings regarding the factors affecting quality assurance implementation are presented in Section 5.6. The findings on

current approaches to enhancing quality assurance are presented in Section 5.7. The findings on the strengths and weaknesses of quality assurance at U-VN are presented in Section 5.8, and the last section presents the concluding remarks. Each section is presented below.

5.2 Perceptions of academic leaders about quality assurance at the U-VN

As discussed in Chapter 2, quality assurance in universities is commonly understood as “fitness for purpose” (Tran, Nguyen, & Nguyen, 2011; Westerheijden, Cremonini, & van Empel, 2010). The current research in both developing and developed countries has also suggested that the view of quality assurance is multi-faceted (Lim, 2001; Materu, 2007; Nicholson, 2011; UNESCO, 2014c) because the nature of quality assurance is related to the context of each university. It is important in this section to clarify what is meant by “quality assurance” for the research participants if subsequent discussions on the subject are to be meaningful.

The findings from the qualitative data indicated that the academic leaders have different to understandings of university quality assurance. The issues concerning quality assurance as viewed by the academic leaders are categorised into two areas: quality assurance as an essential mechanism and quality assurance as fitness for current higher education standards.

Firstly, all academic leaders believed that quality assurance is an essential mechanism and an important part of successful teaching and learning. Most academic leaders agreed that quality assurance is one of the most pervasive mechanisms used by the university to promote the high quality of teaching and learning. This is expressed clearly by one academic leader, who stated:

Quality assurance in the university can be understood as the efforts of all relevant stakeholders such as administrators, lecturers, staff and students within a university to ensure the high quality of teaching and learning through creating an excellent learning environment. For example, we need to provide professional knowledge and appropriate and effective teaching methods that are considered as the two values in our quality assurance system to promote high quality of university education. (VN-1, Jun 25, 2015)

This statement indicated that quality assurance was seen as the efforts of all relevant academic leaders, staff and students within a university to promote high-quality teaching and learning through creating an excellent learning environment. Another academic leader described quality assurance as follows:

Quality assurance focuses on every aspects of a training process [teaching and learning]. There are three main aspects of teaching and learning processes: quality assurance of student inputs, training processes and learned outputs. These aspects are strongly linked together in promoting the high quality of all the teaching and learning processes. For example, the quality of student enrolment [input] may have a significant affect on the quality of the training process because if the quality of the student input is high, the quality of the training program will also be high. (VN-5, Jun 24th, 2015)

This statement indicated that quality assurance was about trying to ensure quality of the whole teaching and learning process. Concern for “teaching inputs” was seen as the most crucial in the teaching and learning processes. Accordingly, VN-5 explained that “Ensuring the necessary teaching inputs includes the quality of students before enrolling in the university, teaching staff, equipment, materials, and facilities” (VN-5, Jun 24th, 2015). Thus, the entry quality of students plays a significant role in ensuring the quality of their learning processes and outcomes.

The second perception of academic leaders was that they identified quality assurance as the actions aimed at achieving higher education standards and responding to social demands. VN-5 explained, “Within the scope of quality assurance in the U-VN, quality assurance is meant to be a commitment to attain the current higher education standards (VN-5, Jun 24th, 2015). This view seemed to be almost functional in the quality assurance system at the U-VN. Similarly, VN-6 expressed “Quality assurance is something that needs to be done. It will require certain higher education standards being met by using monitoring instruments, and activities aimed at improvements, and external quality assessments, including benchmark activities”. According to the academic leaders from the U-VN, quality assurance also means meeting the demands of relevant stakeholders in society by improving the outcomes for students. One academic leader elaborated further:

Quality does not mean that a university just only focuses on teaching students or giving exams to students, but the university must offer courses that are responsive to the social community needs, and it must

teach students how they can expand their horizons. (VN-3, Jun 25th 2015)

The academic leaders' perceptions about the quality assurance was related to the demands of social and personal needs. To achieve these requirements, VN-4 also commented the learning outcomes involved knowledge, skills, and attitudes that the labour market requires. Teaching and learning purposes should address employment status, productivity, earnings, career development and adaptation to help young people live in fulfilling ways and harmoniously in society. In this sense, quality assurance is understood as a tool to promote improvement in educational quality products. These perceptions reflect a similar pattern offered by Madden (2014). He said that quality assurance focuses on the provisions and processes designed by an institution to promote the quality of the education it provides. It was also evident that quality assurance was seen to involve monitoring, reviewing and evaluation processes to ensure that the university education was meeting current higher education standards.

Evidently, it can be said that the perceptions of academic leaders about quality assurance at the U-VN are strongly linked to the university's value placed on the quality assurance system. Specifically, unlike other university activities, quality assurance was seen as an essential mechanism for enhancing and maintaining the quality of teaching and learning. Most academic leaders acknowledged that quality assurance, was a process requiring the effort of all relevant stakeholders such as academic leaders, staff, management of the university and students to achieve quality assurance goals. To strive for quality, efficiency and professionalism in all activities, requires for the quality assurance system to be aligned with the system following external higher education quality assurance standards.

The next section will review academic leaders perceptions on the current quality assurance policies at the U-VN.

5.3 Current status of quality assurance policies

Chapter 4 showed that MoET, QAI-VN and QAC-U-VN make policies and regulations and set standards in accreditation quality assurance for the U-VN. In this section, the

academic leaders' perceptions of the current status of quality assurance policies will be determined, in particular, their purposes, processes and problems are investigated. The empirical findings from the interview data can be summarised as follows.

Firstly, all academic leaders clearly stated that quality assurance policies at the national level are a pillar of the quality assurance policy development at the university level. An interviewee added:

The development of quality assurance policies at the university quality assurance centre must follow national policies such as the Regulation on Tertiary Education Quality Standard published by MoET as a point of reference to be built into all quality assurance at the university level. In addition, like a member of the VN, the U-VN also has responsibilities for all existing VN's policies and guidelines for our quality assurance processes. However, as an independent academic institution, the U-VN publishes some sub-policies to further enhance the quality assurance implementation sought within U-VN. (VN-3, Jun 25, 2015)

Hence it could be argued that both national quality assurance policies and VN's policies have an important role in the policy domain of quality assurance in the U-VN. At the national quality assurance policy level, the MoET plays the main role being responsible for quality assurance procedures in all universities. MoET's responsibility includes policy making, guidance, supervision, and coordination of all other educational programs and bodies, such as those in other ministries, provincial authorities and/or administration of the higher education institutions (D. F. Westerheijden et al., 2010).

Secondly, with regard to the current quality assurance policy status, most academic leaders revealed that quality assurance policies within U-VN were in the process of achieving regional quality assurance standards. Their main argument in supporting their view was that U-VN was working towards achieving regional quality assurance standards in all aspect of university activities. The U-VN also is also strengthening and enhancing quality assurance by applying both the VN quality assurance standards and those of the AUN. This hierarchy of organisation provides a road map for regional stages in the national and international processes of quality assurance. One interviewee further clarified that the development of quality assurance policies was based on:

A quality assurance mechanism and policy based on the VN's policies and VN standards as references. The VN standards are essential for providing high teaching and learning standards to attract foreign teaching and learning recognition. (VN-4, Jun 22nd, 2015)

Most academic leaders argued that the U-VN must comply with both the government's policies, and VN's policies to align their specific activities. An academic leader commenting on the current situation said:

Many guidelines have been published within our university to monitor the quality of teaching, learning, and research activities. It can be said that quality assurance implementation should be under the supervisor of policies. (VN-5, Jun 24th, 2015)

The statement indicated that the quality assurance policies are considered rich sources because they covered and controlled all university activities. Policies also help to provide public confidence in institutional autonomy because they contain statements of intention and the principle means by which these will be achieved. Procedural guidance can give further detailed information about the ways in which the policies are implemented and provide a useful reference point for those who need to know about the practical aspects of carrying out the procedures. Supporting this interpretation, an academic leader noted that, "with the variety of quality assurance policies at both national and institutional university levels, they help the university to address the internal and external quality assessment"(VN-3, Jun 25, 2015). However, VN-4 further commented that, "there are a lack of quality assurance policies in their faculties. The academic faculty does not have their own policy, but I am sure that the university has quality assurance policies to which academic faculties have to conform" (VN-4, Jun 22nd, 2015).

Findings from the interviews revealed that the academic leaders have a positive perception about the current quality policies. At both national and institutional levels, quality assurance polices appeared to be sound. They are considered to be closely related to all the processes of quality assurance implementation. Consequently, the linkages between quality assurance policies and quality assurance implementation were evident in all quality assurance activities and respond to the government and VN policies. In the next section, the current approach to enhancing quality assurance within the U-VN is considered.

5.4 The current practices of quality assurance system activities

Implementation of quality assurance activities involves carrying out systematic activities and assessments to determine which processes should be used to achieve the intended quality assurance standards and to provide assurance that they are performed efficiently and effectively. To explore how quality assurance implementation occurs from staff perspectives, this section presents findings from the quantitative questionnaire data analysis concerning quality assurance system implementation at the U-VN. A list of quality assurance practices that mostly described the current status of quality assurance system implementation has been utilised. The list of statements provided a scale with the four options: already implemented, currently implementing, not implemented and planning to implement (see Table 5.1). This section also provides quality assurance evaluation methods that are appropriate within the U-VN through ‘yes’ or ‘no’ closed questions (see Table 5.2).

Firstly, the empirical findings of the current quality assurance system as practiced are summarised in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 indicates that each statement was perceived as “Already implemented” by between 53.6% and 17.0% of the respondents. The exceptions were “Setting of mission and goals for the university” and “Provision of guidelines and conditions to support academic staff in promoting quality teaching and learning”, which were between 78.0% and 12.2%, respectively. A similar response pattern was observed in academic staff reports, as the majority of the academic staff respondents reported that the list of activities for quality assurance success were “Currently implementing”. The ratings for the items were between approximately 63% and 42%. Among these statements, “Establishment of a management system to promote quality, and promote those goals are achieved” is a statement that had the highest response to “Currently implementing” at 78.0%. Unlike other quality assurance activity statements, approximately 27% selected “Building a quality culture (environment) and sharing values across departments” as “Planning to implement”. It could be concluded that staff considered the U-VN has largely implemented all of the activities for successful quality assurance. In the next paragraph, the current quality assurance methods are investigated.

Table 5.1: The current practices of quality assurance system as perceived by academic staff at the U-VN

Current practices of quality Assurance	Already implemented		Currently implementing		Not implemented		Planning to implement	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
a) Setting of mission and goals for the university.	32	78.0	8	19.5			1	2.4
b) Identification of strategies or functions required for implementing the goals of the university.	15	37.5	25	62.5				
c) Setting of quality criteria standards for teaching and learning across all programs.	22	53.6	19	46.3				
d) Setting of quality criteria standards for research activities.	13	32.5	25	62.5			2	5.0
e) Establishment of a management system to promote quality, and promote that those goals are achieved.	8	19.5	32	78.0			1	2.4
f) Provision of guidelines and conditions to support academic staff in promoting quality teaching and learning.	5	12.2	31	75.6	4	9.8	1	2.4
g) Conduct of regular reviews of the study program and curriculum.	13	17.1	25	61.0	3	7.3		
h) Conduct of regular staff meetings to discuss quality of student learning.	7	17.0	25	32.6	9	21.9		
i) Use of results from program/course reviews for improvement of student learning	10	24.4	24	58.5	7	17.7		
j) Building a quality culture (environment) and sharing such values across departments	12	29.3	17	41.5	11	26.8		

Secondly, with regard to the current quality methods and tools available for quality assurance evaluations in the U-VN, academic staff were asked for their reflections on whether the evaluation methods set by the U-VN were acceptable and implementable in the context of their university. Their responses are summarised in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Utilisation of quality assurance methods as perceived by academic staff at the U-VN

Methods	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
a) External-evaluation	41	100	0	0
b) Self-evaluation	40	97.6	1	2.4
c) Survey and interview	31	75.6	10	24.4
d) Focus group	28	68.3	12	29.3
e) Others	0	0	0	0

The results from Table 5.2 demonstrated that academic staff considering both external-evaluation and self-evaluation were reported by most academic staff respondents as being the two popular quality assurance methods with 100% and approximately 98% responding affirmatively. Other quality assurance methods less popular were “Survey and interview” with 75.6%, and “Focus group” was lowest with 68.3%. It was interesting to note that other relevant quality assurance evaluation methods outside the list were not known by academic staff within the U-VN. The reason for this could be that some academic staff had fewer opportunities to engage with the quality assurance processes.

The findings from Tables 5.1 and 5.2 revealed that all quality assurance activities were considered by staff to have already been implemented at the U-VN. Quality assurance evaluation methods including external review and self-evaluation were perceived by participants as very important quality assurance evaluation methods in the university institution. However, external-evaluation was perceived as the most commonly undertaken quality assurance method within the U-VN. According to the university’s strategic planning review, the quality assurance planning review within U-VN focused on an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses; and the strategic directions, objectives, and responsibilities with clear timeframes. Like most Vietnamese universities, academic leader participants accepted that evaluations by external-evaluation conducted by a government agency were transparent and truly reflected the performance in their university. The following section discusses quality assurance as practices in teaching and learning in the U-VN.

5.5 The current practices of quality assurance of teaching, learning and research activities

The university academic leaders were asked to respond to the interview questions based on their experiences and opinions of quality assurance in teaching, learning and research activities. The results of academic leaders' perceptions were categorised into three sections: the quality assurance of academic programs, quality assurance of delivering teaching and learning and the criteria for teaching, learning and student research.

5.5.1 Quality assurance of academic programs

The participants reported that quality assurance of academic programs was found to be a crucial element determining quality assurance within the university. The analysis of interview data indicated a range of processes utilised at the U-VN to promote the quality of academic programs. The empirical findings are summarised as follows.

All academic leaders confirmed that the matching of current higher education standards was the first need for quality assurance in academic programs. An academic leader stated, "as for many Vietnamese universities, quality assurance of academic programs at U-VN has to constantly respond to internal and external reviews, which include program development, program reviews, and benchmarking" (VN-4, Jun 22nd, 2015). Most academic leaders believed that the current courses or units are designed with a reasonable structure, met the requirements of the knowledge, skills and higher-order skills such as synthesis, analysis, evaluation, and critical thinking by students and express valid outcomes from each sector.

In addition, providing appropriate curricula to meet the needs of the labour market was a necessary characteristic of the quality assurance of an academic program. To achieve this purpose, one academic leader suggested that:

The U-VN and/or on behalf of the university, an academic faculty, can invite external stakeholders such as professional bodies, and ask them to review the course purposes, content and the students' progress and attainments. They are also requested to make suggestions on the best form of student assessment. Professional bodies make their own suggestions based on their experience and expectations as well as on international trends. (VN-5, Jun 24th, 2015)

During the interviews, most academic leaders also highlighted that their course outlines for any development were subjected to external examination by visiting examiners at the end of each year. These processes were regularly implemented within each faculty.

For instance, the quality assurance of academic program development should be considered along with both higher education national and regional standards. As one academic leader explained the development of the academic program as follows:

Step by step, we are applying for the advanced training programs from a famous university in the Asian region and over the world to develop our training programs. More specifically, the academic programs should be flexibly designed, structured, suitably accredited, and transferred between academic programs. (VN-5, Jun 24th, 2015)

The findings from this section indicated that all academic leaders at U-VN seem to express satisfaction with their current programs. They believed that the success of academic programs depended on how well they meet the current higher education standards and how well programs had been developed with advice or examination by relevant professional bodies. The findings also revealed that the quality assurance of academic programs was linked to teaching and learning strategies informed by international higher education standards. The next section, presents the quality assurance of teaching and learning.

5.5.2 Quality assurance of delivering teaching and learning

In the interviews, all academic leaders indicated that the quality assurance of delivering teaching and learning was considered a crucial element that determined overall quality assurance in the university. Participants spoke of some approaches for maintaining quality assurance when delivering teaching and learning. Findings were categorised into two areas: the monitoring of teaching processes and the evaluation of teaching processes. Those approaches can be summarised as follows.

Most academic leaders suggested that the emphasis on the monitoring of teaching processes was a common approach to promoting quality teaching at the U-VN. For example, VN-3 explained, “During the teaching process, all lecturers follow the

academic guidelines and teaching conditions regarding the U-VN” (VN-3, Jun 25, 2015). This information also indicated that academic policies played a significant role in the monitoring of the quality of teaching processes.

For instance, a few academic leaders cited that promoting teaching and learning evaluation is another critical approach. The evaluation would be more effective if the teaching and learning evaluation mainly focused on student satisfaction. The academic leaders elaborated, “The feedback from student evaluation is focused on what they enjoyed about the course, the difficulties they faced, the appropriateness and adequacy of readings provided, and time allocated to the course” (VN-6, Jun 25, 2015). Unfortunately, this approach has faced many challenges within the U-VN. For example, according to one academic leader “Student feedback is only regularly offered with a few course or units due to much paperwork being required. There is a need for more human resources and teaching resources” (VN-5, Jun 24th, 2015). The results suggested there may be an inadequate university capacity to support student evaluations, which may be an issue preventing effective evaluation of teaching and learning.

A majority of the academic leaders from the U-VN also fostered a desire to promote quality teaching processes that were well managed and supported individual teaching plans. Another leader confirmed that “The lecturers should follow a schedule of an individual teaching plan or workflow under the monitoring of the Head of Faculty, Head of Units and academic community to deliver the academic program objectives” (VN-3, Jun 25, 2015). It is clear that personal teaching plans and the attention to monitoring by academic leaders were seen as other critical elements for promoting high quality teaching and learning.

The findings in this section are that the quality assurance of teaching and learning places emphasis on processes and mechanisms for monitoring rather than student learning processes. The teaching evaluation through student feedback was seen as important because the results of student feedback may be more appropriate than some other methods such as class observation. In the next section, the criteria for teaching and learning are presented.

5.5.3 Criteria for teaching, learning and student research

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the U-VN uses the Promulgation of Regulations on Tertiary Education Quality Standards, launched by MOET in 2014 (MoET, 2014c) as the main reference to build and measure the quality of teaching, learning and research. The interviews with the academic leaders illustrated that they have had their own experiences of teaching, learning and research criteria in their university. The specific criteria expected and suggested by the academic leaders were developing appropriate teaching and learning criteria, maintaining quality of curricula, maintaining services and resources to facilitate quality of learning outcomes and concentrating on student research.

Developing appropriate teaching and learning criteria: When asked to express their opinions on what are appropriate teaching and learning criteria, most academic leaders suggested that they should truly reflect the high quality of lecturers' qualifications, match current national higher education standards, match the university's academic guidelines and, colleagues' peer-review standards, promote student satisfaction and the interaction between lecturers and students. However, the high quality of lecturer qualifications is found as a central criterion for promoting the quality of teaching and learning. In supporting this argument, VN-1 explained that, "A good quality university should has high-qualified lecturers who have research skills, relevant curriculum, excellence in course delivery and adequate learning and teaching skills" (VN-1, Jun 25, 2015). A few interviewees suggested that the teaching criteria should be matched to the academic standards in the Promulgation of Regulations on Tertiary Education Quality Standards offered by MoET to determine the quality of student learning at the U-VN. For example, an academic said that, "Everything we do on teaching and learning is in accordance with the national policies and university policies" (VN-6, Jun 25, 2015). Moreover, student satisfaction is also a criterion cited by one academic leader. He indicated that the aims of the university promoted graduate students who were successful and meet the requirements of their future roles as teachers:

I think quality assurance of teaching and learning can be seen as learner satisfaction because when a new direction in the field is applied, we should consider how to accommodate new directions. This will help the lecturers to adapt for quality training in teaching. This idea comes from the perspective of quality that is coincident with the targeted aims of students. The commitment to working together for this purpose of jointly supporting the implementation of the objectives is going to promote success in the implementation of the teaching goals. (VN-5, Jun 24th, 2015)

Supporting student satisfaction as a cited criterion, VN-3 further mentioned that, “It is necessary to apply new teaching methods and have a commitment of both lecturer and learner in achieving learning objectives”. VN-3 also explained that there are many other factors required in teaching for the satisfaction of the learner such as the curriculum, teaching methods, communication skills, social skills and personal growth.

Maintaining quality of curricula: The U-VN participants believed that there are several aspects to achieving high quality curricula. According to the academic leaders, the most important element of maintaining the quality of curricula was the need for balance between theory and practice. One of the academic leaders noted that “Traditional curriculum used to focus on theory rather than practice. Now, when we design or review a curriculum, we always consider the balance between theory and practice” (VN-5, Jun 24th, 2015). Another academic leader pointed out that:

There should be specific requirements in the teaching curriculum framework such as relevant curriculum, adequate learning, teaching methods, and good delivery of courses and contents. (VN-1, Jun 25, 2015)

With reference to curricula development within U-VN, another interviewee added:

The aim of supervision in university teaching and learning is to make sure that the school sets out the objectives of the teaching programs. For example, teaching programs should have a detailed outline, and be fully implemented in terms of the objectives. The training programs need to be approved by the school, recognising the timetable constraints and processes for deployment of resources. (VN-5, Jun 24th, 2015)

Another crucial criterion that determined the quality of teaching and learning at the U-VN was that the qualities of students who entered the university. This means all students enrolled must have attained a satisfactory scholarly standard pre- entry, which may involve a special exam offered by the U-VN or an equivalent public

award to promote the quality of teaching and learning processes. As noted by an academic leader below:

The quality of student enrolment input will affect the quality of the training process. If the quality of the student input is likely to be high, the quality of the training program is high. (VN-2, Jun 25, 2015)

VN-2 further explained that input to achieving high standards involves all resources, including administrators, lecturers and services personnel and students, facilities, technology and funding needed for the entire educational process. To address the quality of students entering, an academic leader explained that:

Basically, a capacity assessment applies for all entrance and graduate students. A capacity assessment focuses on a variety of knowledge and skills such as in science, mathematics, literacy and politics. Where relevant to pass the exam, candidates are required to have comprehensive knowledge to complete assessment tasks. The purpose of assessment seeks to assure the students enrolled will be a good student and have the ability in learning, research and also lifelong learning capacity. (VN-3, Jun 25, 2015)

Academic leaders from the U-VN also indicated that the student capacities with regard to both recruitment and their on going performance played a very significant role in maintaining quality assurance of academic programs.

Maintaining services and resources to facilitate quality of learning outcomes:

The academic leaders shared the view that an important element of academic program delivery for determining quality was teaching and learning resources. For example, VN-1 pointed out that “To improve teaching effectiveness, a variety of resources should be provided such as libraries, equipment and student learning support services, particularly online equipment and IT services”. In addition, resourcing of individual requirements for both lecturers and students were also an element of quality assurance. The status and availability of these qualities for implementation will be discussed further in Section 5.7.3.

Concentrating on student research activities: The U-VN quality assurance policies emphasised the need to assess the ability of students to perform research as an element of quality learning. In terms of students’ research activity criteria, it was noted that the university recognised the significance of students doing research

during their undergraduate courses. One academic leader stated that, “The University requires 100% of undergraduate students to conduct research” (VN-1, Jun 25, 2015). Another academic leader also raised a similar view, stating that, “The university willingly provides maximum facilities and supports the necessary conditions to enable students to undertake research” (VN-5, Jun 24th, 2015). In this way, the university had put in place a number of mechanisms to enhance student research.

Findings from the interviews of academic leaders demonstrated similar ideas about quality assurance for teaching, learning and student research activities. The conviction was that the standards of teaching and learning should concentrate on the relevance of teaching and learning processes, the high qualifications of staff, intake of well-qualified students, well-designed curricula and resources, an effective exam control committee, and good management and leadership to provide excellent graduates for employment. Student research was viewed as a significant element of teaching and learning for ensuring the high quality of teachers for the future. In the next section, the factors affecting quality assurance implementation are investigated.

5.6 Factors affecting quality assurance implementation

According to Lim (2001), the adoption of an institutional approach to quality assurance in a university can only work if a number of conditions are met. The conditions affecting implementation of quality assurance in a university are commonly influenced by the university’s capacities, plus external and internal environmental factors. In this section, the perceptions of both academic leaders and staff toward factors that affect the success and effectiveness of quality assurance implementation at the U-VN were investigated. The effectiveness of the factors based on the findings were categorised into three major groups: policy factors and the governance structures, university leadership and human resources and physical resources. The findings of both qualitative and quantitative data are presented below.

5.6.1 Policy factors

Most academic leaders indicated that the quality assurance policies were not effectively implemented at the university. This had led to frustration, as indicated by an academic leader:

Overall, we have comprehensive and sound quality assurance policies but in the implementation processes we faced many challenges concerning the effectiveness of these policies. For example, many requirements of government policies did not match our university's characteristics and the context of the university. (VN-4, Jun 22nd, 2015)

It is clear that quality assurance policies in the U-VN appeared to be very good or even perfect on paper. However, in practice, these quality assurance policies were not always effective. The main reason for this may have been that the quality assurance agencies at both national and university levels applied the same Promulgation of Regulations on Tertiary Education Quality Standards, offered by MoET in 2015 to all Vietnamese universities. As a result, the individualism and uniqueness of the U-VN was neglected. The academic leaders also indicated that the policies at the national level did not achieve the desired level for their institution. In addition, lack of clarity in the guidelines were another challenge identified by an interviewee, who explained:

It could be said that, there are many factors deemed to affect the policy implementation but not clear meaning in these words and the lack of sub-policies matching the conditions in each university are a significant concern for quality assurance implementation. I strongly believe that the national quality assurance policy produced little improvement in the quality implementation within our university (VN-4, Jun 22nd, 2015).

Furthermore, the academic staff perceptions of the current quality assurance policies were investigated by asking participants to rate their agreements with quality assurance policies at both national and institutional levels. Academic staff responses were ranked on a four-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, unsure and strongly disagree). The findings are presented in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 clearly shows that a majority of the academic staff had “Strongly agree” (51.2%) or “Agreed” (43.9%) for the government policies. With regard to quality assurance policies at the university level, most academic staff had “Agree” (58.5%), followed by 29.3% with “Strongly agree”. As can be seen from Table 9, only a few academic staff had “Unsure” with regard to the effectiveness of national and

institutional quality assurance policies with (4.8% and 12.2%, respectively).

Table 5.3: Academic staff perceptions about policy factors affecting quality assurance implementation at the U-VN

Quality Assurance Policies	Strongly agree		Agree		Unsure		Strong disagree	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
a) Governance policies have a significant role in quality assurance development in the U-VN	21	51.2	18	43.9	2	4.8		
b) Institutional policies have a significant role in quality assurance development in the U-VN	12	29.3	24	58.5	5	12.2		

The main findings from the interviews and questionnaires revealed that the U-VN has quality assurance policies at both national and institutional levels, and the policies are sound. A majority of participants agreed that quality assurance policies were directly related to the process of quality assurance implementation within the U-VN. The linkages between quality assurance policies and quality assurance implementation were evident in all quality assurance activities and responded to the government and national institution policies. In this study, quality assurance policies consisted of both statements and practices. However, in the context of the U-VN, none of the academic staff were satisfied with the current quality assurance policies at both levels. The reason may be due to the challenges they faced for both quality assurance policy development and implementation. In other words, the challenges were not only in the policy-making processes, but also in the lack of capacity for implementation.

5.6.2 The effectiveness of institutional quality assurance factors

This section provides the findings about the perceptions of academic staff (level of influence) regarding the effectiveness of the quality assurance institutions in quality assurance implementation at the U-VN. The questionnaire provided the following five options for ranking: 1 is extremely influential, 2 is very influential, 3 is somewhat influential, 4 is slightly influential, and 5 is not influential at all. The

findings are summarised in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4: The ranking of the effectiveness of quality assurance institutions in the implementation of quality assurance at the U-VN

Institutional Quality Assurance Components	Mean	Ranking
a) The university	2.41	1
b) Academic committees	2.65	2
c) Quality assurance agencies	2.95	3
d) The government	3.35	4
e) External stakeholders (relevant professional organisations and employers)	3.55	5

The results from Table 5.4 show that the averages of agreement (Mean) for five institutional quality assurance components were ranked from 2.41 to 3.55. Among the five quality assurance institutions, “The university” topped the list, followed by “Academic committees”. The respondent results placed “Quality assurance agencies” as third, followed by “The government”. Lastly, “External stakeholders (relevant professional organisations and employers)” were listed as having the least contribution to quality assurance effectiveness at the U-VN. In the next section, university capacity is examined.

5.6.3 University capacity factors

Academic staff at the U-VN identified barriers to the university’s capacity to implement quality assurance. These challenges are linked to the lack of human resources, funding resources and strategies to measure quality assurance. As VN-2 mentioned, “At both government and institution level, there are not enough qualified and experienced people nor funding to make specific institutional policies and quality assurance implementation successful”. Following such negative experiences, VN-4 explained that, “We do not have well-trained and experienced administrators and staff to make quality assurance policies and carry out quality assurance practices”. Such comments suggested that the university had not yet implemented quality assurance measures, effectively resulting in problems in realising the university’s mission and direction. For example, an academic staff member

commented that, “Quality assurance procedures are politicised and our autonomy is strictly limited”. The politicised system in most higher education institutions also limits academic freedom in universities. Academic freedom is commonly regarded as the sine-qua-non of university values.

In addition, a few academic leaders argued that the lack of autonomy in their university management was a negative concern. As an academic leader at U-VN reported:

The implementation of any quality assurance policies and plans within U-VN mainly depend on the VN’s quality assurance policies and plans. I think that the U-VN should have more freedom to make a decision in the implementation of quality assurance. (VN-1, Jun 25, 2015)

This issue of university autonomy and academic freedom within the U-VN was mentioned in an interview with an academic leader who argued that lack of interest and autonomy in designing a mechanism for implementing the quality assurance was a common problem within the U-VN.

The findings in this section indicated that the academic leaders consider the quality of academic leaders, staff, university autonomy and academic freedom as necessary for successful implementation of quality assurance. In the next section, the factors concerning resources are presented.

5.6.4 Resource factors

The success of quality assurance mechanisms at a university entails both physical and financial resources. This section provides both qualitative and quantitative data analyses on the university’s resources. In the case of the U-VN, most academic leaders and staff expressed a negative view about the availability of quality assurance resources. These empirical findings are summarised in the three points discussed below:

Firstly, the academic leaders indicated that the lack of funding resources was a barrier to the success of quality assurance implementation. A participant clarified this as follows:

Quality assurance is one of the important tasks in our university. It is a task on which we spend much of our time and funds every year.

However, we do not have significant funds or resources supplied by the government. For example, for supporting delivery of quality assurance at the university level, every year, we have to arrange the finances for quality assurance by cutting down financial or other resources from other university activities. (VN-6, Jun 25, 2015)

The argument advanced above suggests that the funding from government plays an important role in ensuring quality assurance. However, the availability of governance funding seemed to be inadequate in the immediate future for the implementation of quality assurance at U-VN. In such circumstances, leaders and academic staff considered it very difficult to expect an effective implementation of quality assurance mechanisms in the university. One academic leader highlighted as follows:

The government funds the study fee for all students who study at teacher education universities. In this sense, only students receive a benefit directly from government. The university's financial resources are always lower than other published university funds because the educational universities are not allowed to receive financial income directly from their students. (VN-1, Jun 25, 2015)

This statement indicates that the absence of critical financial resources for Education Universities in Vietnam is common and there is a great need to develop and implement quality assurance initiatives. The interpretation is that there is apparently a government funding issue, especially in the context of the U-VN and other teacher education universities, which need more effective financial support.

Secondly, but not least, physical facilities and student support services appeared to be a serious problem. The infrastructure and facilities (buildings, libraries, laboratories, and equipment etc.) necessary to facilitate quality education were not adequately installed. The participants also raised issues with the lack of infrastructure and facilities. One academic leader, VN-3, indicated that, "It is very difficult to implement quality education standards with such poor classrooms, large class sizes, inadequate laboratories, libraries, and rudimentary student support services and present staff qualifications and experience" (VN-3, Jun 25, 2015). It was clearly noted that the absence of critical resources was a serious factor in this university when seeking to develop and implement quality assurance initiatives. For instance, at the time of the interviews, the U-VN had to share facilities such as library and classrooms with others member universities within VN. One of the interviewees said, "One of the factors affecting implementation of quality assurance mechanisms is

related to the mismatch between the student population and the university's available resources" (VN-5, Jun 24th, 2015). Another academic leader realised and acknowledged this fact:

The main issue is the capacity of the library. Library services are obviously central to ensuring the quality of teaching and learning of a university. It provides books, reading materials relevant to the curriculum and many other academic student support services. But, such resources seem not to be available in the case of U-VN. (VN-1, Jun 25, 2015)

An academic leader at U-VN described the existing situation as below:

I think, the library is one the most important factors adversely affecting the quality of teaching and learning. Therefore, updated books, research materials, library services such as space to sit [search and read] and times [long opening hours] are major supports required for day-to-day teaching and learning. However, currently our students have to share the library with other students within the VN, which leads to the library always being overcrowded, and most of the available books and reading materials are out of date. (VN-3, Jun 25, 2015)

This situation indicates that the U-VN was attempting to conduct quality assurance without having strong physical and financial support. The results from the open-ended questionnaire showed that the library had no links to exchange information and material extractions with other universities. The U-VN did not own an electronic library, but shared one with the VN and the current computer system was mainly run on an outdated Windows XP operating system. Therefore, new software cannot be installed on this model, and the maximum exploitation of the current electronic library database had been reached.

Furthermore, academic staff perceptions toward educational resources for quality assurance were investigated. Academic staff attitudes were ranked on a four-point Likert scale: a rich variety of resources, adequate, limited and not at all. The findings are summarised in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5 shows a similar response pattern in the academic staff reporting on "Current textbooks" and "Research monographs" as "Adequate", with 58.5% and 41.5%, respectively. However, the "Other materials from the library category" was considered "Limited" with 48.8%, and 34.1% "Adequate". A few academic staff agreed the educational resources constituted "A rich variety of resources".

Table 5.5: The educational resources for quality assurance at the U-VN

Physical Resources: Materials	Current textbooks		Research monographs (materials, professional journals and articles)		Other materials from the library	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
A rich variety of resources	7	17.1	3	7.3	5	12.5
Adequate	24	58.5	17	41.5	14	34.1
Limited	9	22.0	21	51.2	20	48.8
Not at all	0	0	0	0	1	2.4

In addition, the investigation revealed findings from the open-ended questionnaire section concerning financial support for teaching, learning, research activities and other university services. Common views frequently mentioned included that the governance of the university should be concerned with the university budget to provide reserved funding for academic staff to ensure availability of books and reference materials. For example, an academic staff member noted, “I think, there is a need to upgrade both the libraries and facilities”. The U-VN should create a good teaching and learning environment by establishing at least the minimum teaching and learning resources required within all institutions. The U-VN should also provide academic staff with individual offices so that they can have a private place to work while at the university and supervise students’ independently, apart from their teaching hours.

Thirdly, all academic staff were asked to indicate their opinion of the individual service supports at the U-VN by answering closed questions. The findings are summarised in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6: Individual service support as perceived by academic staff at the U-VN

Physical Resources: Infrastructure	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
a) Having an individual office	18	43.9	23	56.1
b) Having an office to provide privacy and space for preparing teaching materials and confidential discussions	36	97.8	4	10.0
c) Having a personal computer	30	73.2	11	26.8
d) General administrative and staff support are available	16	39.0	21	51.2

The results in Table 5.6 show that another challenge related to the physical resources was a shortage of infrastructure. In terms of “Having an individual office”, 56.1% of academic staff said they did not have a personal office. With regard to “Having an office to provide privacy and space for preparing teaching materials and confidential discussions”, a majority of academic staff (97.8%) confirmed that a common room was available. In terms of “Having a personal computer”, 73% of academic staff said they had a personal computer. Finally, with regard to access to “General administrative and staff support”, 51.2% of academic staff said it was not available. From the results, it is clear that the lack of availability of basic facilities such as a personal office and university services seems to be a very serious problem at the U-VN. This situation indicates that the U-VN was conducting its programs without ensuring the availability of basic facilities to support lecturers’ services.

Findings from the interviews and questionnaire surveys revealed that inadequacies in policy statements and human, financial and physical resources for quality assurance implementation were a weakness that is bound to hinder successful implementation. Inadequate library resources and working conditions for academic staff are obviously a central concern for ensuring effective teaching and student learning at the U-VN. It would appear to be very difficult to promote quality teaching and learning to meet regional higher education standards and provide curricula matching with international specialised standards under such circumstances. In the next section, the current approaches to enhancing quality assurance as defined by academic leaders are discussed.

5.7 Current approaches to enhancing quality assurance

There are many approaches to promoting quality assurance in universities that have been reported in the literature. This section provides information on the specific approaches and strategies that have been used at the U-VN. The participants identified three essential approaches that they believe are crucial and specific for the success of quality assurance implementation within the U-VN: improving quality assurance policies, improving information system management and supporting learning resources and student services.

5.7.1 Improving quality assurance policies

Participants in the interviews and questionnaires believed that policies were the main pillars for enhancing quality assurance systems, and such policies should form a cycle of continuous improvement and contribute to institutional accountability. The participants also suggested that quality assurance policy development was an essential way to support a “quality culture” within the university. The U-VN study participants reported that there were several ways to develop quality assurance policies. In the U-VN context, most leaders considered that quality assurance policies are best designed and approved through a consultative process with stakeholders. This process was currently a central consideration at the university, as it emphasised the need for the U-VN to seriously address quality assurance policies. Hence, academic leaders highlighted the importance of developing quality assurance policies through collaboration with all stakeholders. One academic leader explained the development of the current quality assurance policies process:

All quality assurance policy issues within U-VN are developed by consultation with relevant stakeholders [quality assurance experts, academic leaders, academic staff and students]. On many occasions, all academic leaders have participated in the Quality Assurance Centre meetings and discussions on quality assurance policies and strategic plans. Consequently, we also have an opportunity to look at quality assurance policies at the national and the VN levels, and see how we can implement them, modify or respond if we don't think they are suitable for our situation. (VN-5, Jun 24th, 2015)

Consultation with all relevant stakeholders both inside and outside of the U-VN in making policies was important for making the policies more relevant to the

university's context and social requirements. Unlike the formal practices in Vietnamese higher education, the U-VN had undertaken a prominent role in publishing the new quality assurance policies. As an interviewee described:

The making of quality assurance policies follows three processes. First, the Quality Assurance Centre is the main body in drafting all quality assurance policies. Second, the draft policies are sent to all U-VN units for consultation and collecting responses from all staff. Third, we will open a meeting or workshop to deal with an important issue. (VN-1, Jun 25, 2015)

Responses from all stakeholders confirmed that all new policies had been developed through a consultative process. This democratic process mirrors the policy models that were used at the national and institutional levels. At the national level and within national higher education institution, experts are usually commissioned nationally with specific terms of reference. Such experts can be international, national or local. There were typically some meetings convened with the different stakeholders, such as quality assurance experts, academic leaders of higher education institutions, and other relevant civic organisations. They consulted with relevant government authorities and presented their recommendations, which had been adopted in full or with some minor modifications. At the university level, there were some meetings with all academic staff, who employed similar processes as those used at the international level. Thus, policy development was based on democratic values, transparency and co-operation. Such policies and procedures must be in keeping with the overarching national and institutional policies, which clearly included internal and external dimensions. However, VN-1 mentioned that improvement of quality assurance policies through academic staff participation was lacking. VN-1 further noted:

I have just been involved on one of the committees that met to develop the quality assurance policies. Many members were selected to participate but ordinary academic staff did not attend. Only academic leaders developed the policies. (VN-1, Jun 25, 2015)

VN-1 also explained that the participation of academic staff in the development of quality assurance policies needed to improve by involving them fully. In fact, another academic leader, VN-4, explained that, academic staff in each area are currently marginal in quality assurance processes and in some cases non-existent; therefore, the orientation of the new Head of Faculties on policies was not evident to

staff. In the next section, improving quality assurance through more attention to information management is reported.

5.7.2 Improving information system management

Providing information management of quality assurance was identified as a second factor for successful implementation at the U-VN. Academic leaders at the U-VN believed that a quality assurance system would help their staff to consider the best options for achieving the quality assurance standards. Academic leaders identified that improving information flow on quality assurance systems should include: (1) collecting information, (2) sharing information and (3) building a quality culture.

Firstly, there were various information collection methods that had been used to promote quality assurance systems and confidence for making decisions based on sound and reliable data. For example, one academic stated:

We have used a variety of methods to collect information to evaluate and deliver the quality assurance system. We collect information through stakeholders such as student feedback, colleague feedback, classroom observations and exchange consultation with relevant professional bodies. As in other universities, we have developed training procedures, co-operating with some partner universities and through consultation with educational experts. (VN-1, Jun 25, 2015)

This statement confirmed that the U-VN had a structured monitoring system to collect information about the quality of its activities that included student evaluations and feedback from alumni staff and professional bodies. It is clear that the variety of data sources for maintaining quality assurance at the U-VN had provided information to promote their quality assurance system implementation and review. For instance, data collection from relevant stakeholders also encouraged their quality awareness and concerns, and aimed to improve on their insights, strengths and weaknesses. VN-4 stated that “Collecting information from relevant stakeholders is a first step in the quality assurance review process because it also provides evidence for quality assurance self-reporting”. In this view, the U-VN also collected data and examined such feedback to undertake structural measures and improve the quality assurance system itself.

Secondly, sharing and publishing quality assurance information was a cited approach for maintaining the quality assurance system. Several academic participants at the U-VN agreed that the university should be provided with information about all university activities, including the training programs offered, the selection of criteria for the teaching and learning processes, the intended learning outcomes, the qualifications awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to students as well as graduate employment information. As noted by an academic leader, “All relevant stakeholders should have responsibility for the quality assurance system. However, in order to do that, there should be a regular reliable and frank information” (VN-5). For instance, academic leaders indicated that the U-VN should regularly share and publish the outcomes of the quality assurance system. One academic leader expressed the view that:

The U-VN should provide information and knowledge of quality assurance through committee meetings and workshops at school, faculty and institutional level. These meetings would involve consulting with constituencies and deliberations on specific quality assurance issues relating to faculty and institutional levels. A series of workshops should run in faculties in order to discuss the quality assurance plans, and quality schedule tasks to be undertaken during the academic year. The workshops would be meant to create common understandings of the new quality assurance requirements between the different member and constituent parts of the university. (VN-5, Jun 24th, 2015)

Thus, it is clear that the committee structures provided a forum for deliberating on the U-VN quality assurance policies during its formation, hence providing staff with an opportunity to have input and participate in the new quality assurance arrangements.

Thirdly, promoting a “quality culture” was the most often approach cited by the academic leaders and was also an essential strategy for university quality assurance. An academic leader explained the prevalence of this approach:

At the current time, promoting a quality culture in the U-VN is considered the top priority of interest because the implementation of quality is only successful if quality assurance is undertaken by each person. (VN-4, Jun 22nd, 2015)

This statement implied that promoting a quality culture involves building the capacity of quality human resources, such as administrators, academic staff, support staff and students, across the university faculties to develop internal quality

assurance systems that are embedded in the institutional strategies and, finally, its culture. This view was further reiterated by an academic leader, who stated that “Each individual should be able to monitor their own contribution for its quality assurance system” (VN-1, Jun 25, 2015). Therefore, the monitoring of the quality assurance processes should involve all people and build a quality culture at the U-VN. For instance, the respondents were also of the view that the university promotes cooperation and sharing of best practices in the field to raise awareness of the importance of IQA processes. VN-1 also explained the promoting of a quality culture strategy thus: “The elements of a quality commitment culture occur at two levels: (1) individual level and personal commitment to strive for high quality, (2) the collective level shows that individual attitudes and awareness add up to culture” (VN-1, Jun 25, 2015). For instance, most academic leaders at the U-VN believed that ensuring high-quality teaching and learning in their university required collective commitment and sustained engagement by academic staff and students.

However, a lack of commitment and engagement in promoting high quality seemed to be a serious problem for enhancing quality assurance at the U-VN. An academic leader explained that:

The extension of the Vietnamese higher education system and the lack of lecturer resources in many Vietnamese universities has resulted in few opportunities for our lecturers to work outside their immediate system. Currently, we don't have a mechanism to improve these opportunities. (VN-1, Jun 25, 2015)

This statement indicated that if the staff members were viewing their university role as a part-time job this could lead to a lack of knowledge accountability and motivation. Commitment and engagement is one of the critical approaches that encourage quality assurance in lecturers' university role. As shared by an academic leader, VN-6, “Commitment and engagement for the quality is a significant approach to promote the quality of teaching and learning. Each individual academic leader and staff member must be committed to the quality assurance protocols before the academic year begins”. With regard to the student commitment about quality assurance, an academic leader VN-5 explained that, “Many students who enrol at the U-VN are without adequate academic grounding, so the students need more academic guidance, support and follow-up from the university and their lecturers so as to be fully engaged” (VN-5, Jun 24th, 2015). In

the next section, improving the quality assurance of facilities as another possible approach is presented.

5.7.3 Supporting learning resources and student services

As higher education expands in Vietnam, the facilities needed to support it have become a significant issue in most universities. The academic leaders at the U-VN expressed the view that human, physical and financial resources were essential for establishing and maintaining quality assurance.

The participants prioritised the high quality of academic staff as one of the most important learning resources available to students. In order to achieve this purpose, the U-VN published a policy on academic staff recruitment. This policy aimed to promote employment of high quality academic staff, as one of the academic leaders explained:

The most important criterion in the recruitment policy is high quality as evident in the qualifications of candidates for appointment. The institution from which the qualifications were obtained is also important. The second most important criterion is the teaching capability of the lecturer appointed, which should meet the requirements of the teaching profession in higher education. In addition, there are other criteria to be satisfied in the teaching career and student research activities of both academic staff and students which should be motivated by the university. (VN-4, Jun 22nd, 2015)

In the case of U-VN, all academic leaders interviewed believed that appropriate and adequate resources helped to assure quality educational provision. Accordingly, the leaders considered the provision of learning resources and student support services as critical for promoting quality assurance performance. It is very difficult to expect a high quality of lecturer teaching and student learning without ensuring the availability of adequate resources. For example, VN-3 explained in depth that “Resources include financial expenditures per student, accessibility of facilities such as rich media, libraries, laboratories and equipment and student learning support services and technology” (VN-3, Jun 25, 2015). In supporting VN-3, VN-6 also described the current quality assurance resources, stating that “There is a lack of laboratories and practice teaching experience for intensive training of teachers in physics, chemistry, biology, etc.” (VN-3, Jun 25, 2015). It is clear that there was an

apparent lack of resources to support quality teaching and learning. For instance, the interview data from academic leaders at the U-VN also revealed that the classrooms were crowded, libraries are poorly equipped, such as being devoid of current journals and textbooks, and insufficient computers were available. These issues will be further discussed in Section 5.8.2.

A majority of academic leaders at the U-VN agreed that the university should improve the range of resources to assist teaching and learning, such as the provision of professional journals and reference materials, well-equipped laboratories, adequate classroom spaces, offices for individual staff members and general working spaces at the institution. The required conditions for quality assurance implementation will be further discussed in the Section 5.8.2.

The overall findings of this investigation indicate that the efficiency of quality assurance implementation depends on well-designed and developed quality assurance policies, the provision of information on the management of the quality assurance system, commitment and engagement of academic staff and students and the provision of professional standards of physical facilities and university services. However, the findings in this section indicated that the U-VN could do much more to make improvements in quality assurance. In the next section, the strengths and weaknesses of the current quality assurance system at the U-VN are identified.

5.8 Strengths and weaknesses of quality assurance at U-VN

In this section, further analysis of interview data was conducted to examine the extent to which the academic leaders identified the current quality assurance system's strengths and weaknesses at the U-VN.

5.8.1 Strengths of the quality assurance system

The participants identified many strengths of the quality assurance system. First of all, the analysis of interviews and questionnaires showed that the issues of quality assurance were not only a concern of each academic leader, but also of individual academic staff and students. All participants also believed that the current way

quality assurance was implemented was an important element for promoting the quality of education at the U-VN. More specifically, in response to this issue, all academic leaders, academic staff, and students agreed that to accomplish the university's mission, the university should consider quality assurance as vital to ensuring the quality of all training programs and fulfilling its cultural roles. As one academic leader suggested:

I think, quality assurance is a central issue and is an important part of a successful university. Therefore, all efforts for maintaining quality assurance within the university can be found the current university's policies. In order to achieve quality assurance purposes, the U-VN's Board gives very close guidance to help the Quality Assurance Centre and faculties in all institutional activities. (VN-4, Jun 22th, 2015)

This statement indicates that positive perceptions about quality assurance have the potential to impact on the quality assurance practices in the university. Another academic shared:

I am not very sure how other universities perceive the role of quality assurance, but in U-VN, I believe that academic leaders and academic staff recognise that quality is important and without high quality you cannot sustain a university. Without quality assurance, there is no way of ensuring what we are doing is worthwhile. As a result, we have paid great attention to quality assurance. (VN-6, Jun 25, 2015)

Secondly, the U-VN had provided institutional quality assurance policies that explicitly displayed the university's commitment to high quality. The enabling policies set the philosophy, the university's vision, and systematic procedures for student admission, staff recruitment, curriculum development, delivery of courses, and the overall effectiveness of the quality assurance system. This has created a clear framework for promoting and guiding practice.

Thirdly, the development of a quality assurance culture is a vital issue in the U-VN. In this regard, the U-VN's Board had consciously built an organisational culture in which all members were proud of their institution, and are engaged in undertaking voluntarily completed tasks to the highest level. Another academic leader considered:

The development of a quality assurance culture in the University of Education is imperative. The quality assurance culture is built up through regular formal meetings, informal meetings, policies and monitoring quality assurance procedures. For example, we openly celebrate such events together such as at lunchtime, during trips, and birthdays of staff in the school. Furthermore, formal meetings give our

staff a chance to discuss quality assurance issues. Finally, policies and procedures with specific steps promote the effectiveness of quality assurance processes in training courses, the construction of curriculum, syllabus modules, innovations in teaching and learning methods, student assessment, administration, human resources, finance, and facilities. (VN-1, Jun 25, 2015)

Similarly, another academic staff member described another aspect of strengths in the quality assurance system as:

Quality assurance is being carried out in directions, top-down and bottom-up, of the university management processes. This means that the university uses a variety of management methods to direct both university activities and personal activities. The university also requires that each academic leader, staff member, and student is consciously committed to implementing quality assurance. (VN-5, Jun 24th, 2015)

It is noticeable that many positive approaches for assuring quality were already applied at the U-VN, so the conditions necessary for quality assurance implementation were being met. All academic staff were engaged in pursuing quality in their teaching, and leadership and commitment for quality was evident. These commitments indicated that the quality culture was valued within the U-VN.

Finally, to implement quality assessment, the school had set up a self-evaluation for the Council. The group undertaking the self-evaluation included the Principal, Vice Principal, Director of the Center for Quality Assurance in Education, heads of departments, faculties, representatives of professional organisations and experts in the government quality assurance body. The process of self-evaluation enabled internal reviewing of the entire university operation: training, scientific research, international cooperation, organisation and management, faculty staff, students, facilities and finance. This activity engendered the motivation of leaders, faculty, staff and students of a school to pay more attention to quality issues and, ultimately, the overall quality of the university.

In summary, both academic leaders and staff from the U-VN have taken a positive view of the quality assurance in their university. However, the participants also identified weaknesses that their university has faced. In the next section these weaknesses of quality assurance at the U-VN are highlighted.

5.8.2 Weaknesses of the quality assurance system

The research participants were asked to express their perceptions about the weaknesses of the quality assurance system's implementation in the U-VN. Responses from the interviewees and questionnaires revealed that there were four areas of weakness in quality assurance implementation, as summarised below.

Firstly, all participants argued that the U-VN suffered a shortage of information about the university mission statements and quality assurance strategies. As previously discussed, clearly defining the university mission, vision and strategies for ongoing development has an important role in leading the university toward higher quality assurance. It answers the questions why, what does the university do, and who does it serve? For instance, the university mission statement also distinguished the university from other universities within the Vietnamese higher education system and highlighted the U-VN's unique attributes. However, most academic staff agreed that their current university's mission needed be reviewed to make it clear and suitable for the specific context of the U-VN. In view of this, one academic leader highlighted a weakness of their quality assurance system as follows:

Although we have already published the university's mission on our website and displayed quality assurance policies, I believe that these statements are still too general and do not cover some specific areas as well as defining strategic solutions for maintaining quality development. For instance, we do not regularly review and up date the university mission. This may make the quality assurance procedures out of step with the development in the VN quality assurance practices. (VN-1, Jun 25, 2015).

In addition to this, an academic leader noted:

Quality strategic planning includes a review of the university mission but there is no survey to evaluate the effectiveness of the dissemination activities about the university's mission within the university, and the dissemination to inform outside agencies and organisations is limited. (VN-6, Jun 25, 2015)

Secondly, another weakness of the quality assurance system identified was related to the poor standards of the quality assurance policies. Most participants claimed that the common problems were related to the quality assurance policies, as many quality assurance policies at the U-VN were still being processed or awaiting publication. As a result, the U-VN did not have a comprehensive quality assurance policies system.

For example, as one participant said, many quality assurance policies needed more specific details and implementation in the context of the university. More specifically, an academic leader explained:

The adjustments, additions, and making of new policies in some areas are not consistent and cover all of the activities. For this reason, the university is not working according to ISO quality standards. (VN-3, Jun 25, 2015)

It is clear that the U-VN was facing challenges in formulating and publishing quality assurance policies, hence there was a shortage of policies to inform quality assurance tasks. As a result, the university was generally lacking comprehensive quality assurance policies to promote practice.

The third category frequently identified as a weakness was evaluation of the courses and curriculum. In this case, almost all participants argued that not all course and curricula were subject to regular comments from professionals and employers at the stage of program construction. For instance, one academic leader explained that “The diversity of forms of teaching and innovation of teaching methods have only been implemented for full-time students. However, the programs are not regularly monitored and regularly reviewed” (VN-5). Then, VN-5 also explained that the students’ assessments in some programs were not well designed and matched to the assessment objectives.

Finally, weaknesses were identified in the facilities for quality assurance implementation. In this case, the results indicated as lack of appropriate conditions for the successful implementation of the quality assurance process was the most challenging that the university is facing. An academic leader stated:

The classroom size is too small so that it is not adequate for our students when learning, especially when used for the exams. The laboratory is only used in the teaching hours, and does not allow students access outside class time. Facilities are separated into multiple locations due to the difficulty in managing, operating and using them. (VN-3, Jun 25, 2015)

In short, it was clear that the U-VN’s quality assurance system had weaknesses due to the shortage of system mission information, and lack of policies for implementing the quality assurance thoroughly. The limitations of resources were also cited and

these limits of resources may also have had serious impacts on current quality assurance development.

5.9 Summary

In this chapter, the interview and questionnaire data in relation to both quality assurance policies and practices at the U-VN were presented. The results presented in this chapter revealed that academic leaders and academic staff had different perceptions in defining quality assurance related to their particular academic positions. Most academics believed that quality assurance was important for the university to maintaining the quality of teaching, learning and student research activities. In quality assurance implementation, the U-VN has adopted various approaches for the purpose of ensuring the quality of the education it provides. The analysis of the views of respondents illustrated that a central concern of the leaders and academic staff was implementation of quality assurance that is aimed principally at ensuring the quality of teaching and learning. At the institutional level, participants from the U-VN defined “quality assurance” as meeting higher education standards and societal needs in a way that translated to employability.

Analysis of the participants’ responses indicated that there are specific reasons why gaps and issues in quality assurance policies and implementation are a major threat to quality delivery at the U-VN. One reason for the threat is that quality assurance is still a relatively new phenomenon at both national and institutional levels in Vietnam. Participants reported a great mismatch between the written policies and the actual practices in the delivery of university academic programs. Finally, the participants reported the lack of conditions required for the successful implementation of quality assurance processes.

In order to deal with these issues in quality assurance policies and practices, the U-VN has implemented different approaches for enhancing quality assurance, such as ensuring a quality curriculum, higher lecturer qualifications, more effective teaching methods, more abundant and better learning and teaching resources and facilities, improved university management and leadership and improving the entry quality of

graduates. These approaches provide the basis for recommendations for enhancing quality assurance at the U-VN provided in Chapter 8.

The next chapter will report on the perceptions of academic leaders and staff at the SOE-AU about quality assurance under the same headings presented in this chapter.

Chapter 6 Quality assurance in the university case study in Australia: Analysis of interviews and questionnaires

6.1 Introduction

This chapter reports findings from interviews with academic leaders and the questionnaire with academic staff related to quality assurance in the SOE-AU. The reported perceptions of participants were based on their work-related experiences of quality assurance. The data were collected during fieldwork in the SOE-AU between Sep 2015 and Dec 2015. The results were treated confidentially and anonymity was maintained throughout by the use of pseudonyms. The five academic leader interviews at SOE-AU: Head of School, Deputy Heads of School, Chair of Teaching and Learning, Chair of Research and Department Academic Manager were assigned the codes AU-1, AU-2, AU-3, AU-4 and AU-5. The data are presented as a combination of information from both the interviews and questionnaires; however, the interviews were the main data source for this chapter.

The data collected on the seven areas point to interesting patterns, which are the main subject of discussion in this chapter. Section 6.2 of this chapter begins with the discussion of the participants' conceptions of quality assurance as determined from interviews. The next section discusses the current status of quality assurance policies reported by participants and the third section presents data regarding the implementation of quality assurance. The fourth section identifies findings regarding the quality assurance of teaching, learning and student research activities. The findings regarding the factors affecting quality assurance implementation are presented in Section 6.6. The findings on current approaches to enhancing quality assurance and strengths and weaknesses of quality assurance at SOE-AU are presented in Sections 6.7 and 6.8. The last section offers some concluding remarks.

6.2 Perceptions of academic leaders on quality assurance at the SOE-AU

In this section, the university academic leaders' perceptions and understandings of quality assurance are investigated. As the researcher, I formally interviewed academic leaders concerning their perceptions of quality assurance. Data from the interviews are presented in terms of the emerging themes indicated in the responses. The results of the interview data analysis indicated that the concepts of quality assurance are complex and open to wide interpretation. The following analysis and discussion deals with the three major themes arising from the academic leaders' perceptions about quality assurance at the SOE-AU: quality assurance as a central issue, achievements of the highest educational standards and responding to external requirements.

Firstly, a majority of the academic leaders declared that quality assurance was a central issue in the university for the promotion of successful education. As an academic leader stated:

I would say that quality assurance is understood to require the efforts of all people in our school. Individual working alone cannot make a decision on it [to achieve quality assurance goals]. Actually, quality assurance is very important and without it we cannot sustain our school. The quality assurance system in our school is very open, and all people [relevant stakeholders such as academic leaders, staff and students] are asked for feedback about this [in the quality assurance system reviews]. (AU-1, Sep 1st, 2015)

It was recognised that quality assurance was an open system where all relevant stakeholders could provide feedback to promote the university system. The effective implementation of quality assurance depended on this open system with regular feedback from all stakeholders, such as academic leaders, lecturers, students and other relevant people striving for improvement in educational quality.

Secondly, quality assurance refers to the achievements of the highest educational standards set by the institution. The quality assurance within the institution was therefore evident in excellent results. In regard to this, an academic leader described the following views:

Teaching, learning, research and university services are the main areas quality assurance efforts are concentrated on in our school. For example, the approach to quality assurance for teaching and learning is to make sure that the content of the courses or units are contemporary, relevant and excellent. The people who teach courses and units, especially unit's Coordinators are critical in ensuring the highest quality results. (AU-3, Sep 22nd, 2015)

Similarly, an academic leader, AU-2, commented:

Quality assurance of research is important because it contributes to the teaching and learning and also make sure the contents and methods of teaching and learning processes are providing the highest quality. However, beside the research, all people concerned must work towards the highest quality they can achieve. (AU-2, Sep 21st, 2015)

The description above also shows that quality assurance in the SOE-AU was centrally focused on aspiring for excellence. This reflected a core value that ensured high quality provision of all teaching and student research activities. AU-2 also recognised the potential of student research activities in ensuring the quality of teaching. Quality assurance for teaching is based on research. However, to achieve excellence in teaching, learning and research, required that all personnel enhance their teaching and student research activities.

Thirdly, quality assurance was a mechanism that was responsive to current requirements for external higher education standards. A few academic leaders clearly indicated that the interests of students were promoted and protected within Australia's higher education sector for this purpose. For example:

Quality assurance comes through a variety of mechanisms. For example, we have a lot of quality assurance around the teaching processes and course designs because they are accredited by outside bodies like national bodies, the State Board of Studies, etc. So being a teacher in education, we must have a lot of quality assurance from the professional bodies outside authorities and independent organisations but also from other mechanisms and processes as a part of our work in our university. (AU-4, Oct 1st, 2015)

The statement above indicates that quality assurance had a direct relationship to improving the educational experience of university students. Quality assurance can be seen as a process aimed at achieving higher education standards through both internal and external higher education requirements. In addition, the achievement of quality assurance can be identified through the highest standards reached by

graduates. In other words, quality assurance was concentrated on maintaining quality in the delivery of the school's teaching activities and the provision of an excellent teaching-learning environment. Another academic leader explained that "I think quality assurance within the School of Education is understood as academic quality assurance in that the courses and structure of courses lead to quality learning outcomes. In terms of the individual, they units should contribute to the learning outcomes of the courses". (AU-5, Aug 17, 2015)

The overall findings from the interviews revealed that quality assurance was viewed as an essential element of the university in promoting excellent teaching and learning results. Quality assurance in the SOE-AU was seen as a central issue in the university for the promotion of successful teaching, learning and student research. The findings revealed that academic leaders' perceptions of quality assurance were about providing a work environment that encouraged intellectual and student personal development, and flexibility in terms of attitude, knowledge and skills. The results were convincing of the university leader's valuing of the quality assurance system. The quality assurance process had a direct relationship with improving student educational experiences. In the next section, the university participants' perceptions about the current status of quality assurance policies, especially their related purposes and problems are investigated.

6.3 Current status of quality assurance policies

Interviews were conducted with the academic leaders of the SOE-AU to examine their perceptions of the current status of quality assurance policies, especially the purposes and problems. These findings from the interview data are summarised below.

Firstly, a majority of the academic leaders indicated that the quality assurance policies were considered an important aspect for promoting high-quality teaching, learning and research. As one academic leader argued, "With regard to the policy management, the university obliges each school to have appropriate policies and procedures to support efficient and effective service delivery and provide assurance by all schools within the university" (AU-1, Sep 1st, 2015). For instance, the university's *Strategy and Planning*

2016-2020 (AU, 2016g) highlighted that, the current AU quality assurance policies supported best practice in complying with higher education quality standards within the national regulatory framework to meet the requirements of students, employers, industry and stakeholders, and were implemented within a state-wide collaborative framework that included institutes and central support units.

Secondly, most academic leaders had positive perceptions about assurance policies at both government and university levels. All academic leaders agreed that the current quality assurance policies determined the directions and procedures for stimulating the development of courses and units, the variety of learning activities and teaching standards of lecturers. At the time of the interview, one academic leader indicated that:

I think that our quality assurance policies have clear objectives which encompass quality assurance enhancements, monitoring, review processes, academic program development, student support, student learning, assessment and research by the school. (AU-2, Sep 21st, 2015)

Another academic leader added:

For me, personally in my role as a supervisor, there are many quality assurance policies. Some of these have to do with [a] code of conduct with staff and others deal with teaching processes. The quality assurance policies show clearly the responsibilities of staff and other relevant people that have responsibility to promote quality assurance. The policies in principle, I think, cover all aspects of conduct. For example, academic policies ensure the minimum expectation of teaching and learning processes that we must follow and the guidelines in terms of managing staff in research and services. (AU-4, Oct 1st, 2015)

Similarly, another academic leader explained as follows:

Regarding my role as a chair of research, there are many quality assurance policies that inform my work. I have to read and give feedback concerning many quality assurance policies during the school year. For example, ethics policies seem to be the big thing at the moment. Formally, quality assurance policies in our School are divided into two levels, the AU's policies and the school's policies. (AU-3, Sep 22nd, 2015)

Regarding the sources of quality assurance policies, an academic leader explained:

The university has a variety of quality assurance policies and...guidelines. The university has published some of them, and others are published by external institutions. For example, the Australian Quality Assurance Framework (AQF) is one of external policies. The publishing of the policies is required in accordance with external requirements, also the University's requirements and specific school's

requirements. I think the quality assurance policies in our school match all of these [requirements]. (AU-1, Sep 1st, 2015)

The findings indicate that the university had a variety of quality assurance policies that covered all of the school's activities and are vigorously pursued at the university and school levels. The thorough and clear objectives of the quality assurance policies brought many benefits to the school in promoting teaching, learning and student services. Further analysis of the data obtained from academic staff concerning quality assurance policies are presented in Section 6.6.1. In the next section, the quantitative data analysis concerning the implementation of quality assurance activities is considered.

6.4 The current practices and methods of quality assurance system

This section provides an overview of quality assurance implementation through a description of quality assurance practices that outline the current quality assurance system implementation at SOE-AU. The academic staff responded to a ranked list of statements about current quality assurance as practices with four options: already implemented, currently implementing, not implemented and planning to implement. This section also provides academic staff views on whether quality assurance evaluation methods were appropriate within the SOE-AU with 'yes' or 'no' responses. The findings shown in relation to the status of quality assurance implementation as indicated by the academic staff.

The empirical findings about the current quality assurance system as practiced are summarised in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 indicates that statements perceived as "Already implemented" ranged between 53.0 % and 26.4%. Similarly, the reports for those statements that are "Currently implementing" were between 65.3% and 23.5%. "Building a quality culture (environment) and sharing values across departments" was reported as "Planning to implement" by 17.7%. The results from Table 6.1 revealed that there was a small difference in the ratings of respondents across the statements and most academic staff report activities as "Already implemented" and "Currently

implementing”. This suggests the engagement of their school in quality-related activities was widely acknowledged and implemented.

Table 6.1: Implementation of quality assurance activities as perceived by academic staff at the SOE-AU

Quality Assurance Practices	Already implemented		Currently implementing		Not implemented		Planning to implement	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
a) Setting of mission and goals for the university.	14	41.1	16	47.6	2	5.9	2	5.9
b) Identification of strategies or functions required in implementing the goals of the university.	9	26.4	18	56.3	5	14.7		0
c) Setting of quality criteria standards for teaching and learning across all programs.	14	41.2	14	41.2	4	11.8	2	5.9
d) Setting of quality criteria standards for research activities.	18	53.0	12	48.8	2	5.9		0
e) Establishment of a management system to promote quality, and ensure those goals are achieved.	14	41.2	13	38.2	7	23.6		0
f) Provision of guidelines and conditions to support academic staff in promoting quality teaching and learning.	10	29.4	12	37.5	6	18.9	2	6.3
g) Conduct of regular reviews of the study program and curricula.	16	47.7	10	29.5	6	17.7	2	5.9
h) Conduct of regular staff meetings to discuss quality of student learning.	13	38.2	9	26.4	8	23.5	4	11.8
i) Use of results from program/course reviews for improvement of student learning.	15	44.1	11	32.3	4	11.8	4	11.8
j) Building a quality culture (environment) and sharing values across departments.	12	35.3	8	23.5	8	23.5	6	17.7

Furthermore, with regard to the current quality assurance methods being applied in the SOE-AU, all academic staff were asked to reflect on the evaluation of these methods. Academic staff responses are summarised in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2: Utilisation of quality assurance evaluation methods as perceived by academic staff at the SOE-AU

Methods	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
a) External-evaluation	26	84.0	5	16.0
b) Self-evaluation	31	100	0	0
c) Survey and Interview	16	52.0	16	52.0
d) Focus Group	14	45.0	17	55.0

The results showed that all the academic respondents held the view that self-evaluation was the most prevalent quality assurance methods, while 84% of academic staff agreed that external-evaluation was the next most common method. Other evaluation methods such as survey and interview, and focus group, were nominated by 52% and 45% of staff, respectively.

The findings revealed that the SOE-AU has already introduced a comprehensive and a formal process of implementation of quality assurance system activities. Each statement is perceived to be “Already implemented” or “Currently implemented” reflecting a well-established and long-experienced process of implementation of quality assurance activity implementation at the SOE-AU. However, self-evaluation are the most valued method of quality assurance evaluation noted. In the following section I discuss quality assurance as practiced in teaching and learning at the SOE-AU.

6.5 Quality assurance of teaching and learning

The data presented in this section indicate that a variety of perceptions about quality assurance of teaching and learning were proffered by both academic leaders and staff at the SOE-AU, and the data were categorised under three headings: quality assurance of learning outcomes, evaluation of teaching and setting criteria in teaching, learning and research. Each aspect is discussed below.

6.5.1 Quality assurance of delivering courses and learning outcomes

A majority of the academic leaders indicated that learning outcomes were the first marked indicators of high-quality teaching and learning. To achieve such learning outcomes, an academic suggested as follows:

I think quality assurance should focus on course learning outcomes [high-learning outcome as the ultimate purpose of quality assurance]. Therefore, the design of courses or structures of the course need to contribute to learning outcomes [for students]. To achieve the learning outcomes of a course requires each unit to be well designed and clearly formulated to contribute to the course. So, when presenting a course to the student, we [need to] look at the learning outcomes of each unit. (AU-5, Aug 17, 2015)

Another way suggested by an academic leader to promote the quality of teaching and learning was through promoting high quality curricular design, monitoring and commitment. As an academic leader explained:

Quality assurance in teaching means to make sure the contents of teaching and learning are contemporary and relevant to achieve excellent results, and the people who do that, such as unit coordinators, or lecturers are primarily responsible for achieving outstanding teaching and learning. Secondly they ensure that everyone in the team provides high-quality teaching. (AU-2, Sep 21st, 2015)

These statements indicated that each unit should advance the course's purposes by fulfilment of the relevant course objectives. Further to that, to promote quality assurance in learning outcomes, key people such as course and unit coordinators, lecturers and students were all committed to high-quality teaching and learning.

With regard to the monitoring of course and unit delivery, an academic leader explained:

In respect to quality assurance of teaching and learning outcomes, we achieve this through the monitoring of the teaching in each unit. We have been using student feedback to realise improved teaching to ensure the quality of personal student learning and promote student-learning experiences. We apply the moderation of marks, including flexibility in marking student assessments to acknowledge any contributions from students. We also try to minimise instances of plagiarism, and encourage students to not engage in this practice. However, applying evaluation methods for teaching and learning must be supported by all staff within

the school at the AU, and also be recognised by accrediting bodies. (AU-5, Aug 17, 2015)

The monitoring of quality assurance in teaching and learning through the evaluation of student assessments is identified as an important way to promote the quality of learning outcomes. This indicated that the views on quality assurance of teaching and learning were similar to the university's statement about teaching and learning strategies. The results of student assessments must be informative and have the potential to encourage high levels of engagement in learning by students.

6.5.2 Quality assurance of teaching evaluation

The interview data from academic leaders revealed that teaching evaluation was a crucial element for determining quality assurance within the SOE-AU. All academic leaders suggested that frequent teaching evaluation was mandatory for all units taught within the school. Frequent teaching evaluation was also noted as a tool for checking the standards and regulations governing assessment, and it yielded positive suggestions for improvements where necessary. An evaluation of teaching was conducted regularly after completing each unit or a project. The academic leaders reported that teaching evaluation was conducted through student feedback, academic committee reviews and regular school meetings. An academic leader stated:

At the end of a course, we [the leaders] will be in there to review processes and see how a course has progressed. Reviewing processes involve a course coordinator and unit coordinator, they will review teaching and learning processes. Every time, all units and courses are also evaluated through student feedback. Student feedback in each unit or course is also conducted through online surveys. Then, the Unit coordinator will look on student feedback results to evaluate and suggest improvements for the units of courses, (AU-1, Sep 1st, 2015)

AU-1 also viewed students' feedback as the best indicators of teaching quality. The course coordinator who was familiar with the student feedback evaluations was likely to have responsibilities for the quality of the teaching. However, the feedback from student evaluations has sometimes been an inaccurate reflection of lecturers' performances. Therefore, the collected evaluations from students should be used cautiously and combined with other methods as suggested by an academic leader who explained as follows:

There are several ways to conduct course a review or take measures that could be taken to improve teaching, depending on what you want to know about an individual unit or course. It is great to use students' feedback because it can tell you how a unit is progressing. However, sometimes, we don't need students' feedback for evaluating particular aims. For example, you can see from interactions with your students or using mailings to communicate with students. We have some other popular ways to do unit or course reviews, for example, we have meetings with the course coordinators and unit lecturers to discuss such matters. Then, we will ask for one external peer-review to check to ensure it is of a high quality. We also think about the specific learning criteria that can be useful for international students, especially if they come from different education backgrounds. By doing so, we fulfil quality assurance requirements. (AU-3, Sep 22nd, 2015)

During an interview, an academic leader said, "There are reviews of all courses that are combined with SOE-AU's Committee of Teaching and Learning, with the Chair of Teaching and Learning conducting reviews of the all courses". There were both internal and external peer reviews conducted.

For instance, teaching evaluations through regular school meetings were cited by all academic leaders as a critical factor in supporting standards of teaching and learning. All academic leaders revealed that the main purpose of such school meetings was to review the teaching and learning processes for quality control purposes. As an academic leader commented:

School meetings are a regular way to promote the quality of teaching and learning. We are a school of professional educators therefore we should present high quality in teaching and learning. I set up school meetings regularly and believe that it promotes academic members to understand and support the highest quality of teaching and learning. I am quite sure, we have a professional academic staff resource that understands the needs for performance to achieve the best quality teaching and learning experiences for students. (AU-2, Sep 21st, 2015)

Regular school meetings with professional educators, course coordinators, subject coordinators and lecturers to share teaching techniques and practices were designed to improve the quality of teaching and learning in general and ensure consistency in pedagogy when introducing new teaching methods. Such meetings recommended relevant material for teaching and learning. For instance, AU-3 confirmed that the aim of school meetings was a significant way for ensuring quality assurance in teaching and learning.

The findings revealed that common approaches employed in teaching and learning quality assurance entailed teaching evaluations by the Teaching and Learning Committee, course coordinators' reviews, unit coordinators' reviews and student evaluations. In some cases, these were augmented by external peer-reviews of the curriculum as taught. However, the regular school meetings were crucial for promoting the quality of teaching and learning. In the next section, the major criteria for teaching, learning and student research are presented.

6.5.3 Criteria for teaching, learning and student research

In the interviews, all academic leaders indicated that achieving excellence in teaching standards was vital for the student experience in the school. They revealed that SOE-AU used specific major teaching and learning criteria that could be separated into those main criteria, as explained below.

Firstly, requiring specific qualifications of academic staff was cited as a teaching and learning criterion. An academic leader reported that experiences, skills, qualifications and interests are significant areas of teaching expertise that appeared to be the most common requirement used within the SOE-AU. For example:

The academic staff are very well trained in the specific areas. They know how to deal with students' evaluations and do adjustments to the units. Academic staff should also know how well their students are progressing and learning during the study of each unit in order to choose the most appropriate teaching methods. I think they are doing very well. (AU-1, Sep 1st, 2015)

AU-1 also indicated that the lecturers' qualifications and work experience were the basis for appointment to lecturer positions at the AU, which resulted in high-quality teaching. Another academic leader shared a similar view that, "I think, the other main criteria for quality assurance in teaching and learning, is choosing academic staff who deliver the curricula well" (AU-4, Oct 1st, 2015). A high level of qualifications among academic staff was a critical factor in promoting a high quality of teaching. It was also pointed out that the academic staff members were highly experienced and qualified in conducting quality assessment in academic programs according to the institutional requirements.

Secondly, most academic leaders agreed that the expectation of course specifications, program structures, content, and learning outcomes of teaching were extremely important criteria in teaching and learning. A majority of academic leaders saw learning outcomes as an important teaching criterion because learning outcomes informed students of expectations of the knowledge and skills that they would acquire during the course. To achieve the expected learning outcomes, an academic leader pointed out that the SOE-AU provided a high quality and standards-based formative educational experience that is aligned to students' needs. With regard to course specification, program structure and content, a few academic leaders explained that the current teaching criteria focused on providing high-quality learning outcomes for the courses in the context of the graduate skills. For instance, the course specification should made explicit the intended outcomes in terms of knowledge, understandings, skills and other attributes. The course specification was also made available to stakeholders and included detailed content showing expected learning outcomes and how students could achieve these.

Thirdly, some academic leaders interviewed also saw course development and course reviews as another teaching criterion. One academic leader believed that the lecturers should foster a climate that values student involvement in the evaluation of teaching and the assessment of learning outcomes. She provided evidence of the monitoring of teaching and learning criteria as follows:

We have the major criteria for quality of teaching and learning. Those have come from the Student Evaluations in which students are questioned in every unit. They also provide feedback across a range of different teaching objectives. Such feedback indicates if students have been provided with clear unit objectives. Also, if lecturers provided timely, structured feedback to students, and with access to resources of a wide range. (AU-4, Oct 1st, 2015)

However, to achieve the purposes of specific courses, AU-4 explained that the teaching criteria should be related to the specific unit's objectives, the nature of these units and learner needs.

Fourthly, another academic leader referred to a teaching criterion and goes on to say that:

The main criteria for successful teaching and learning depend on individual [lecturers]. I think the lecturers should promote their students' study habits and provide guidelines in many different ways

of learning and accessing the materials, because students learn in different ways, and they have to be interested in what is being studied. Also lecturers need to be enthusiastic about their teaching and show they love to do it. (AU-3, Sep 22nd, 2015)

It is recognised that the teaching criteria contained commitments about the specific course content, teaching methods and support for students' learning. The particular teaching criteria and content knowledge being taught was guided by the lecturers. Consequently, the teaching unit needed to be informative and well-communicated, and lecturers needed to be available for student consultation.

Another teaching and learning criterion considered was the provision of appropriate of teaching and learning resources. AU-3 explained this with the following examples:

We should provide a variety of materials for a variety of ways for learning because with over 88% of education students being are off-campus, students must be helped to access the learning materials online through Moodle. So the lecturers need to provide PDF, written documentations, videos, audio, Wikipedia and so on. On the other hand, the learners have different ways of learning. For example, some people learn through listening, others learn through watching or reading, so we should provide various options. I think it is important for a lecturer to use videos and other the academic devices other than listening or sitting in the classroom. Fifteen minutes for a video or listening can be quite long for many students (AU-3, Sep 22nd, 2015)

It is clear that the SOE-AU concentrated on providing a variety of learning contexts and teaching methods to meet student needs, including appropriate modern technologies. As a result, the teaching criteria not only matched efficient unit content delivery by the school, but also aligned with each learner's personal needs. A variety of teaching materials were essential for effective teaching, learning results and meeting the course specifications.

Lastly, the evaluation of teaching and learning and student assessments were another important criterion. The interview data revealed that course reviews seemed to be a critical part of the teaching and learning improvements within the SOE-AU. Respondents stated that in general, a course review was likely to be conducted by a course coordinator, and a peer-review as well as through student feedback.

Every term, some form of unit evaluation is conducted. It often is in the form of feedback from students. Student feedback is conducted through online surveys. Then, the unit coordinator will evaluate student involvement in the evaluation of teaching and the assessment of learning outcomes. The course coordinator will suggest a priority for improving teaching and learning. (AU-1, Sep 1st, 2015)

Using such procedures indicated that all courses delivered within the SOE-AU were regularly evaluated. Regular end-of-course student summative feedback and teaching evaluations by students were common strategies for quality assurance and enhancement purposes within the SOE-AU. In addition, informal course peer-reviews were also important methods for enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. One academic leader noted during an interview that “In terms of the quality assurance and relevant policies, all courses at the SOE-AU must be peer-reviewed by internal [school committees]” (AU-1, Sep 1st, 2015).

In terms of the criterion relating to research for undergraduate students, the academic leader interview data indicated that the school was committed to fostering opportunities for undergraduate research experiences through an honours thesis or independent study projects. However, as one academic leader noted, undergraduate research is not as important as research at postgraduate level. One academic leader stated, “I think that undergraduate research is much less formal. Higher degree research students, are postgraduate level, master’s degrees and PhD are not [involved in] undergraduate research” (AU-4, Oct 1st, 2015). The course coordinators or unit coordinators were responsible for all undergraduate research. An academic leader explained:

A research student is guided by the course or unit coordinators. We [school’s leaders] work with the course coordinator to identify a good student who may conduct research. Such students apply to undertake research in their courses. In this way quality control of the unit and the course is assured. (AU-1, Sep 1st, 2015)

This statement indicated that undergraduate students can choose to work on a project of their own design or as part of their course. The aims of such student research were to foster enquiry and research practices.

Although the interview data did not show specific research criterion for undergraduate level, AU-3 mentored undergraduate research projects, which, he/she

perceived as exciting opportunities to enhance learning with real-time challenges. Student researchers explored areas of study in depth, which can promote both high quality learning and pathways to higher degree studies and further research.

The key findings from this section revealed that quality assurance teaching and learning criteria were monitored through performance indicators. The indicators were determined following a national quality assurance framework. These teaching criteria covered learning outcomes, program specifications and quality assurance of teaching and learning processes. Such benchmarks were used in course design, delivery of the teaching and student learning processes, and in employing technology to enhance the learning experience. They also responded to students' needs to develop their personal academic skills. The suggested teaching and learning criteria described above are also highly relevant to the substantial improvement of quality assurance in teaching and learning within the SOE-AU. The next section discusses the critical factors affecting the successful implementation of quality assurance as identified by the participants.

6.6 Factors affecting quality assurance implementation

This section examines the specific factors that affected quality assurance practice as perceived by the SOE-AU participants. Both qualitative and quantitative data of the interviews and questionnaires were used for this purpose. A thematic approach has been followed to present the results. The factors affecting implementation of quality assurance were categorised into four groupings: policy implementation factors, institutional factors, workload factors and resource factors.

6.6.1 Policy implementation factors

As previously discussed, the effectiveness of the quality assurance policies depended to a large extent on implementation, that is, how well the academic staff knew the policies and how they implemented policies in their day-to-day activities. Both academic leaders and staff were asked to share their views concerning the effectiveness of the implementation of quality assurance policies. The findings from both qualitative and quantitative data analysis yielded both positive and negative results, which are summarised below.

All participants suggested that implementation of quality assurance policies had direct effects on quality assurance improvement at the SOE-AU. An academic leader reported that implementing their quality assurance policies correlated positively with their current work:

I believe that implementation of current quality assurance policies and procedures are very effective due to the strength of policy structures that are designed to support academic members such as the Deputy Head, the Chair of Research, the Chair of Teaching and Learning at SOE-AU, academic managers, course coordinators and lecturers in striving to maintain the quality of their work. In addition, implementation of quality assurance policies is ensured by constantly ensuring that expectations are met. (AU-1, Sep 1st, 2015)

AU-1 suggested above that quality assurance policies were circulated and implemented by managers and academic staff. According to AU-1 the school had the capacity to carry out teaching, learning and student research activities at a high level.

On the other hand, with regard to implementation of policies, an academic leader revealed that this was not always very effective in the work of all academic staff. She explained the situation thus:

Quality assurance policies are very good on paper but they are not always well implemented. I will give you an example about a negative reaction to an aspect of quality assurance policies in implementation. We have a policy on word count in order to set a work load limit for student assessments. If students use too many words in an assessment, it can be failed under existing policy. However, some lecturers are more liberal in applying the rule but some others are not. Similarly, we have a policy for late submission. Some follow this, but some may not. (AU-5, Aug 17, 2015)

Apparently, some aspects of quality assurance policies and their implementation were interpreted differently by academic staff. Perhaps the policies sometimes allowed lecturers to use a measure of professional discretion in particular circumstances. AU-5 mentioned that the failure of some policy implementations was related to the lack of commitment by some academic staff. However, AU-5 also considered that these issues only had a slight effect on student assessment results, and simply replied, "There have not been debates about these matters". Moreover, there are some negative features in the current quality assurance policies that need to be reviewed. One academic leader elaborated:

We have clear guidelines for the quality of teaching. However, a key issue is research-academic policy because there is not clarity in terms of the research workload for our staff or employees. For example, an academic policy asks academic members to carry a research load of 20% to 40%. I strongly believe that the research workload is not appropriate in our school. We are now grappling to apportion responsible quality assurance around research that must be a minimum of 40% of total allocated workload. We need to modify the research workload and clarify the minimum expectations to allocate a balance between teaching and research responsibilities. (AU-4, 1st, Oct 2015)

It was evident from the statements that in some instances, the general requirements in particular quality assurance policies may have resulted in problems in terms of compliance. Indeed, it was considered that some quality assurance policies should be reviewed to make their application more flexible given disparate responsibilities and school contexts such as the current demands of academic staff research. Despite academic leaders' views that the quality assurance policies were not always clear or fully implemented, the general perception was that changes in policies and implementation have been frequent and rapid. An academic leader explained the situation thus:

We had a big change in both policies and management this year. The changes were so quick that they can have a negative impact on our academic staff. For example, many academic staff do not know who is responsible for the quality assurance changes and implementation. (AU-3, Sep 22nd, 2015)

Although, the policies were subject to regular updates, they did not always result in the broad achievement of university improvements. In some instances, such changes may have impacted negatively on the school in a number of ways. Policy changes may have caused difficulties for implementation, unforeseen additional workloads and stress for relevant stakeholders. For example, AU-3 noted that "I am not always sure, but probably, the negative reactions to new policies coming from some people may have arisen because they have not read about it on the website" (AU-3, Sep 22nd, 2015). It was suggested that the lack of uptake of new policies by some academic staff might have arisen from a lack of a sense of responsibility to apply and enforce the policies. It was also argued that it was not unusual to learn that some people never paid attention to quality assurance policies because there was an absence of effective management, policy reinforcement, or a penalty for those who failed to comply.

The perceptions of academic staff about the current effectiveness of quality assurance policies were investigated by asking the questionnaire participants to rate their agreement on quality assurance policies at both national and institutional levels. Academic staff responses were ranked on a four-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, unsure and strongly disagree). The findings are presented in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3: Academic staff perceptions about the effectiveness of quality assurance policies at the SOE-AU

Quality Assurance Policies	Strongly agree		Agree		Unsure		Strong disagree	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
a. External policies have a significant role in quality assurance development in the university.	18	52.9	9	26.5	3	8.8	1	2.9
b. Institutional policies have a significant role in quality assurance development in the university.	21	61.7	11	32.3	2	5.8		0

Table 6.3 shows that institutional quality assurance policies were perceived by approximately 62% of academic staff as having a very important role in quality assurance implementation. Also, nearly 53% of academics strongly agreed that external policies influence the implementation of quality assurance. A few academic staff were “Unsure” about the role of institutional and external quality assurance policies in the development of quality assurance in SOE-AU. This could have been due to the implementation being seen as not relevant to their immediate work.

The overall findings revealed that the SOE-AU had coherent policies, guidelines and effective implementation processes to promote a high quality of education provision at all levels. Such policies and processes had a strong positive impact on the quality assurance principles held and observed by academic leaders and staff. However, some reservations were expressed about rapid changes of policies and the lack of

commitment by some academic staff regarding policy implementation. It was also noted that the staff in the school felt that both external and institutional policies were significant in the implementation of quality assurance at the school level. In the next section, the responding institutional factors are shared.

6.6.2 Institutional factors

The role of institutional factors in responding to quality assurance is crucial in supporting quality assurance implementation. Table 6.4 indicates the responses of academic staff at the SOE-AU when asked their opinion of the effectiveness of institutional factors in quality assurance implementation. The questions provided a rank of the following five options: 1 is extremely influential, 2 is very influential, 3 is somewhat influential, 4 is slightly influential, and 5 is not influential at all. The results are shown in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4: The ranking of the effectiveness of institutional factors on quality assurance implementation at the SOE-AU

Quality assurance policies from	Mean	Ranking
a) Academic committees (Academic Board)	1.47	1
b) The university	3.07	2
c) Quality assurance agencies	3.40	3
d) External stakeholders (relevant professional organisations and employers)	3.50	4
e) The government	3.69	5

Results from Table 6.4 show that “Academic committees” were considered the most significant, followed by “The university”. The respondents ranked “Quality assurance agencies” as third, followed by “External stakeholders (relevant professional organizations and employers)”. “The government” was listed as the least significant in impacting on quality assurance in the SOE-AU. The findings indicate that autonomy of academic communities positively affected the quality of teaching and learning in the SOE-AU. In the next section, the role of the course workload factor is discussed.

6.6.3 Course workload factor

Most academic leaders suggested that the approaches and procedures for the

development and approval of courses were cumbersome. They reported that the academic requirements for the development of new courses, amendments to existing courses, and withdrawal of regulations took too much time and resources. It was even more difficult to achieve success in academic programs when staff were working under heavy workload conditions. One of the academic leaders explained this situation as follows:

The School of Education is one of largest schools at the AU with more than 4000 students and offers approximately thirty courses and around 300 units. All courses and units are required to be regularly reviewed. For instance, the reviews of courses or units are checked to meet national standards such as AQF or address AU's academic policy, which takes considerable time to do thoroughly in course or unit reviews. (AU-4, Sep 1st, 2015)

It is clear that the regulatory requirements for approval of courses generated a significant workload for both academic leaders and staff, particularly in regard to time-consuming documentation. There was also concern over increased staff workload due to the number of courses or units within the SOE-AU. Similarly, one of the academic leaders explained:

With regard to the requirements for course registration, this year we must satisfy the teaching and learning at undergraduate level and course requirements set by accreditation bodies [AHEQAF and TEQSA]. It will take much paperwork and time to address these new rules. We have just thought about the responses to these requirements and some draft responses have been prepared. It takes much time, but it is necessary to respond in order to satisfy quality assurance requirements. (AU-5, Aug 17, 2015)

The requirements for teaching, learning and course registration were considered by some academic staff to be too stringent and required adjustment to staff workloads to meet the external requirements. This had been a burden on the institution since it must allocate additional duties to meet the external quality academic program requirements. Consequently, the course registration processes took too much staff time, which in turn has affected their abilities to maintain the quality standards of the academic programs. For instance, an academic leader indicated that, the course registration process was pushing too much paperwork onto academic staff and significantly affected the quality of their teaching, as they had to reduce time tutoring their students and providing individual student counseling and other benefits for students. Under such circumstances, it was very difficult to work well in meeting the internal and external requirements to develop and implement quality assurance.

In addition, the number of students choosing distance learning was growing at the SOE-AU and has been identified as having serious impacts on quality assurance of teaching and learning. As AU-2 explained “We have over 80% off-campus students enrolled. Therefore, the SOE-AU needs to be concerned about the use of multimedia strategies in teaching and learning, especially with the heterogeneous student backgrounds and the courses delivery infrastructure”. Such views suggested that these situations had serious implications for external quality assurance agencies. The impact of resource factors is presented in the next section.

6.6.4 Resource factors

For the purpose of this study, data analysis on academic participants’ perceptions of the quality assurance resource factors was considered important based on the assumption that the academic leaders and staff perceptions were concerned about the available university resources for quality assurance implementation. Access to quality assurance resources may include administrative support, academic resources, modern library facilities, laboratories, equipment, student learning support services and other technologies. The findings of the qualitative data analysis revealed that all participants were satisfied with current university quality assurance resources. For example, an academic leader indicated that “The facilities and services are adequate, and they were not seen to be a negative influence on quality assurance” (AU-4, 1st, Sep 2015). This in turn suggests that the provisions and services within the institution were satisfactory.

Further perceptions from academic staff substantiated these findings. Academic staff responses were ranked on a four-point Likert scale: “A rich variety of resources”, “Adequate”, “Limited” and “Not at all”. The findings are summarised in Table 6.5 below:

The results in Table 6.5 show that a high percentage of academic staff responded positively to the items on utilisation and quality of educational facilities and services. All groups of quality assurance resources were perceived as either “A rich variety of resources” or “Adequate”. A few academic staff responded with “Limited” or “Not at all”, except “Research monographs (materials, professional journals and articles)”

which were perceived as limited by approximately 35.2%. No academic staff respondents reported “Not at all”. These findings indicated that academic staff were satisfied with quality assurance resources.

Table 6.5: The educational resources for quality assurance at the SOE-AU

Physical Resources: Materials	Current textbooks		Research monographs (materials, professional journals and articles)		Other materials from the library	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
A rich variety of resources	14	41.2	16	47.0	18	52.94
Adequate	16	47.1	6	17.6	12	35.3
Limited	4	11.8	12	35.2	4	11.8
Not at all	0	0	0	0	0	0

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Next, all academic staff were asked about their views concerning the available personal service support using yes/no options. The findings are presented in Table 6.6.

The results in Table 6.6 show that 82.3% of the academic staff agreed that they had an individual office, while 76.5% of respondents agreed that they had a functional room for teaching preparation and discussions. Approximately 94% stated they had a personal computer. It is interesting to note that 100% of the academic staff agreed that general administrative and staff support was available. It was evident that the

provision of excellent working conditions promoted staff motivation in teaching and other academic activities. However, around 17% of academic staff had to work without individual offices, most typically because they were visiting or part-time lecturers. These people had shared offices.

Table 6.6: Personal service support as perceived by academic staff at the SOE-AU

Physical Resources: Infrastructure	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
a) Having an individual office	28	82.3	6	17.6
b) Having an office to provide privacy and space for preparing teaching materials and confidential discussions	26	76.5	8	23.5
c) Having a personal computer	32	94.1	2	5.8
d) General administrative and staff support are available	34	100	0	0

Evidence from the academic staff questionnaire showed that the provision of resources and facilities were not a matter of concern within the SOE-AU. The academic staff were generally satisfied with the resources and facilities that were cited as factors for the successful implementation of quality assurance in the SOE-AU. However, the findings of this study also indicated that the current textbooks in library were not updated regularly, which may have negatively impacted on the quality of teaching and learning. Some lecturers believed textbooks soon dated and in other cases, that units were such that textbooks were inappropriate or simply not available in their library. In the next section I outline the current approaches employed to enhancing quality assurance.

6.7 Current approaches to enhancing quality assurance

Enhancing quality assurance means that a university is meeting the current and future needs of society and is accountable for maintaining standards of teaching and learning, research and services. When the academic leaders and academic staff were asked their opinions regarding the current approaches to enhancing quality assurance in their institution, they identified two specific and essential approaches that they believed were most crucial for the success of quality assurance implementation:

contextually relevant performance and globalising the curriculum. Each approach is discussed below in turn.

6.7.1 Improving quality assurance implementation based on relevant university context

Participants from the SOE-AU were generally aware of the need for quality assurance improvement and that implementation required continuous effort to make the process more reliable with relevant procedures. In an interview, one academic leader argued that quality assurance implementation must become a management tool for monitoring learning, teaching and research for the university. However, it can only be implemented if quality assurance practice increases efficiency and effectiveness, enhances teaching, learning and research, and includes appropriate services. The other aspects of quality assurance that should be taken into account included relevance to the local context (quality and extent of impact), professional practice (standards of programs and innovations) and to a lesser extent, the international context. Successful quality assurance should also link to the efforts of other relevant activities and ensure professional academic integrity in all their activities. An academic leader shared this opinion:

To better implement quality assurance, all approaches should aim to promote quality assurance and highlight relevant benefits in whatever processes we are considering and are undertaking. For example, when I ask [academic staff] to promote the quality of teaching, they should think of the links [teaching] to promote particular actions such as the whole learning processes, student research activities, and other relevant school services [think the relationship between each activity in promoting quality assurance]. Students also should aspire to be excellent scholars and graduates. (AU-4, Oct 1st, 2015)

In addition, successful quality assurance implementation should arise from reliance on good, well through out policies and guidelines. AU-4 commented when asked about the current supportive quality assurance policies:

So I think that, the relevance of quality assurance policies is really important for the whole quality assurance process. For example, the all courses in the AU are developed in accordance with AQF policy and other national quality frameworks. The guidelines sometimes seem like a cumbersome exercise. They should be clear in their guidelines to help all courses at Australian universities be truly moving toward high quality. (AU-4, Oct 1st, 2015)

It was clear that the quality assurance policies played a key role in initiating such procedures to improve quality assurance in the institution. As a result, when the quality assurance policies were put into practice, they helped the school's performance in accordance with local and international context requirements.

6.7.2 Providing international curricula

The quality of higher education programs is often judged by their relevance to national, global and professional practice. In recent years, changing curricula are addressing an emerging competitive international market in the area of global education. With regard to this trend, the SOE-AU has sought to keep pace in a dynamic global higher education environment and meet the rapidly changing demands of students, academics and industries. Research findings related to these points are summarised below.

Most academic leaders suggested that the SOE-AU overtly stimulated interest in study abroad through the globalised curriculum and by expanding teaching and learning integrated with opportunities for international education. They believed that the development of a globalised curriculum was not only intended to increase students' understandings of other cultures, but also enriched this with educational experiences for lecturers. As an academic leader stated:

There should be a concern for the global community whereby our lecturers can teach in Vietnam and other countries, and the Vietnamese lecturers can teach in Australian universities. So we hope that international experiences will create a common quality assurance standard of teaching and learning, which can be measured. We need to say, the standards used for every unit are in accordance with AQF policies and this has been matched with international higher education, national and institutional standards so that international exchanges are possible. However, seeking comparability between courses and units to other units in an international market is likely to be a major problem. (AU-4, Sep 1st, 2015)

This statement confirmed that the global community can create opportunities to develop knowledge and skills for the academic staff and students, but it also brings challenges. Thus, in addition to determining what knowledge, skills, and competencies were priorities, the SOE-AU and administrators were also concerned about misunderstandings in a high-quality globalised curriculum. The attempt at

creating a high-standard national curriculum at the SOE-AU was creditable. The following passage captures this perspective:

I believe that all our course providers are now required to meet high standards across Australia and also with many other international higher education institutions. However, I do believe that this process [globalised curriculum registration] needs a lot of people to be engaged in this effort. It is very difficult to confirm whether all our courses meet national and international standards or not. (AU-4, Sep 1st, 2015)

It is clear that engagement with global communities was a positive factor that created innovation in achieving high-quality course delivery. However, it also placed increased workload on the institution, academic leaders and staff.

The major finding from the interview data in this section is that quality assurance performance needed diligence and integrity. Adoption of relevant contextual standards and development of curricula toward national and international higher education standards were identified as fundamental approaches to promoting quality assurance within the SOE-AU. In the next section, the strengths and weaknesses of the current quality assurance systems at the SOE-AU are presented.

6.8 Strengths and weaknesses of quality assurance system

Analysis of the data from the interviews and questionnaires indicated that according to the academic leaders and staff, many strengths of the quality assurance system at the SOE-AU were commendable. However, some areas were considered to have weaknesses that need to be improved. Both strengths and weaknesses are considered below.

6.8.1 Strengths of the quality assurance system

The participants identified a number of strengths that the SOE-AU should retain and build on in the future.

Firstly, the quality assurance system at the SOE-AU was regarded very positively because there was considerable emphasis on the monitoring of quality assurance

principles and processes. The evidence revealed a number of professional people working together in diverse ways to improve the quality of education provided, such as the Head of School, course coordinators, unit coordinators, all lecturers, tutors and the student body. This implied that the task of ensuring quality of a high standard does not only rest on the shoulders of a few, but on all stakeholders. As stated by an academic leader, “I think we have excellent quality assurance processes in the school. We have a Deputy Head of Teaching and Learning who will [oversee] the whole quality assurance within our school, especially accreditation processes, and interaction with the majority of stakeholders within and outside of the school” (AU-4, Sep 1st, 2015). In addition, some academic leaders suggested that the high qualifications of academic staff was identified as an essential characteristic of successful quality assurance for teaching and learning. As AU-5 explained, “Well-trained and high qualifications in a few words should describe our academic staff”. Moreover, professional staff and academic committees support the leaders, staff and students. An academic leader explained the role of the committees:

I think that the main strength [in a quality assurance system] is the benefits of Academic Board, such as the Teaching and Learning Committee and Research Services...Because they can enhance teaching and learning quality through creating academic staff retention, fostering transformative teaching and improving student learning and research. For example, many postgraduate students study under the supervision of Research Services, which this ensures good quality assurance mechanisms. (AU-4, Sep 1st, 2015)

The quality assurance system at the SOE-AU was enhanced by the contribution of the Board in promoting teaching, learning, research and services in accordance with quality assurance standards. It is important to note that the support from the AU Research Services nurtured the number of students doing research, and supported innovation by staff and students to improve the quality of teaching, learning and research.

Secondly, there was an international quality assurance dimension that was closely related to the objectives of achieving organisational goals through globalising curricula. Accessing international higher education standards were found to be marked associated with quality assurance development at the SOE-AU. In addition, participants regarded the course approval process as unique due to this process

requiring evaluation by academic committees within the university and external professional advisors to ensure the content met high standards. The curricula at the SOE-AU were constantly monitored through course coordinators and student feedback, and by responding to mandated professional bodies that required assessment and accreditation of all professional programs.

Thirdly, the participants indicated that frequent communication was a positive factor in quality assurance development. All academic leaders and some academic staff believed the current frequent communication between leaders and academic staff, and academic staff with students were strong elements in maintaining the quality assurance system. Communication between leaders and academic staff was viewed as critical for achieving high quality in academic activities because it was essential for resolving any conflicts and issues within the school's diverse activities. As an academic leader AU-1 explained, "The school meets regularly to solve problems in teaching and learning... previously we only met when there were problems. But now, regular School meetings are held" (AU-4, Sep 1st, 2015). In addition, frequent communication between lecturers and students was important for promoting high-quality teaching. It not only supported student learning, but also resolved issues in the teaching and learning context. The close relationships and communication between academic staff and students was confirmed by an academic leader AU-5 who said, "I am sure ... besides providing excellent teaching, we are providing an excellent student service through communication between academic staff and students" (AU-5, Aug 17, 2015).

Finally, academic leaders believed that current e-submissions and e-marking were critical methods for promoting the quality of student assessments. As an academic leader, AU-5 explained, "We use e-submissions and e-marking through Moodle for all assignments. The e-submission system integrates with Turnitin software for a plagiarism check. The word limit is also considered with our marking of assignments". In the next section, the weaknesses of the quality assurance system are identified.

6.8.2 Weaknesses of the quality assurance system

The data have shown that there were certain weaknesses in the quality assurance system at the SOE-AU, and improvements are desirable. Firstly, both academic leaders and academic staff raised concerns about the issue of heavy workloads that have been prevalent over many years. Heavy workloads have affected the quality assurance system and created problems in offering courses. For example, when interviewed academic leader AU-4 said that, the school had to deliver about thirty different courses to awards (degree, diplomas etc.) and approximately 300 units. In view of the workloads it was apparent that the school did not have enough professional staff to complete all the quality assurance tasks thoroughly. The implementation of courses and particularly individual units depended mainly on sufficient staff, time and other human resources. A respondent from the academic leaders noted that “Lack of time and a large workload are the major disadvantages [in maintaining] quality assurance at the school” (AU-3, Sep 22nd, 2015). This indicates that heavy workloads and lack of time were most likely causing stress among the school’s lecturers. In addition, all courses and units are now required to be checked and accredited by external professionals and bodies (AU-4, Oct 1st, 2015), creating excessive workloads.

Secondly, another weakness of the Australian quality assurance framework for higher education is the four key quality assurance agencies: AQFC, DEEWR, STAA and AUQA. The responsibilities of these quality assurance agencies were a major concern for the academic leaders in the SOE-AU. The reports from academic leaders indicated that currently the AU in general and SOE-AU in particular has too many external agencies to which it must respond. It became quite complex and demanding for the institution to harmonise all of these requirements.

Finally, using student feedback on teaching and learning at the SOE-AU was the most common method for the gathering and reporting of students’ perceptions about their learning experiences. Student feedback involved reviews of the quality of the teaching and learning processes for the purpose of course or unit quality assessment evaluations. However, the participants indicated that there were concerns about

student feedback due to the efficiency and reliability of this method. One academic leader, explained:

Student feedback on teaching and learning is the most regular way of [conducting] course and unit reviews but this process has a major challenge due to the number of students who refuse to be a participant in the surveys. For example, the unit survey is automatically available for all students at the end of each unit. However, I did not find much convincing evidences due to only a few students (approximately 50%) responding to my units. (AU-4, Oct 1st, 2015)

Although all students were invited to give feedback, not all students were interested in responding to course or unit surveys. This may be problematic for the quality of a course summary report, as effective student feedback to lecturers is then limited. In my professional experience, I note that, student feedback on teaching and learning is not always provided, is not detailed enough, does not tell the lecturers where they can improve, and does not adequately explain why they have received certain results. As a result, academic lecturers or unit coordinators may not know how to use the feedback effectively or cannot use the feedback in a relevant, and meaningful way for improvement as a starting point of a course or unit review. Hence, this does not contribute positively to the quality assurance of teaching and learning.

6.9 Summary

In this chapter, the perceptions of the academic leaders and staff about quality assurance policies and practices in the SOE-AU have been explored. In general, the academic leaders viewed quality assurance as requiring the effort of all stakeholders to achieve the highest quality in all their university performance areas. However, there were some mismatches between academic leaders' perceptions at the SOE-AU. When defining "quality assurance", the academic leaders categorised two areas: (a) quality assurance as a management tool to promote quality of teaching, learning and research and (2) aspects of Australian higher education and international standards that determined quality assurance in their institution. The findings supported the argument that the academic leaders had varying perceptions of quality assurance in universities.

The main finding of this chapter was that the current quality assurance policies at both government and institutional levels had significant roles in quality assurance implementation. They were viewed as a positive factor for quality assurance implementation within the University and this was evident in the formation of quality assurance policies for all aspects of the university's activities. The findings suggested that the SOE-AU had a sufficient variety of quality assurance policies that positively influenced the success of quality assurance in teaching, learning and research. In terms of approaches to promoting quality assurance of teaching and learning, the SOE-AU focused on enhancing academic programs and providing a high quality learning experience. Student feedback on teaching and learning was used as regular input to the purpose of course or unit reviews. In addition, the combination of specific institutional, national and international standards to measure teaching and learning processes were found to be significantly associated with quality assurance improvement. It was also reported that in the SOE-AU, contextually relevant performance, globalising curricular and reducing workloads were all significant for enabling development of future quality assurance systems.

The following chapter offers a comparison of quality assurance policies and practices between the two case studies at the U-VN and the SOE-AU.

Chapter 7 Comparative analysis of quality assurance at the two university case studies

7.1 Introduction

Literature, policy documents, interviews and questionnaire surveys were used to examine the quality assurance policies and practices in the two university case studies. According to the literature about quality assurance in universities, the quality assurance policies and practices in each university differed to some extent due to nationally mandated policies and their implementation in each particular social and institutional context. To understand the similarities and differences in quality assurance between the U-VN and the SOE-AU, a unified thematic approach was consistently adopted in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 to provide comparisons between the perceptions of academic leaders and staff about quality assurance in the two university case studies. This approach provides a basis for a critical discussion of the findings in this chapter. Links are now explored between the cross-case analyses to understand the differences and/or similarities. A comparative approach employing themes within and across the two universities located in Vietnam and Australia “unravels further the complex interplay of policies, structures, cultures, values and pedagogy are found” (Alexander, 2000, p. 4).

Section 7.2 of this chapter begins with the perceptions of the academic leaders from both universities about the concepts of quality assurance. The next section offers a comparative analysis of quality assurance policies and practices in the two case universities, while in the final section, I provide a summary of key findings.

7.2 Perceptions of academic leaders about quality assurance across the U-VN and the SOE-AU

According to the findings presented in Chapters 5 and 6, the perceptions of quality assurance varied greatly among academic leaders in the two university case studies. Therefore, in this section, a cross-case analysis of the interview data will be utilised to

identify the similarities and differences between the U-VN and the SOE-AU academic leaders' perceptions about the concept of quality assurance.

Most academic leaders perceived that quality assurance in universities referred to ensuring teaching and learning processes. The quality assurance system in both universities was used to promote quality teaching, learning, research, accountability and other university education services. The view expressed here shows that quality assurance in universities could be considered a management tool for exercising control over training activities and service delivery. In addition, all academic leaders in the study also argued that quality assurance refers to a university's processes for satisfying relevant quality assurance authorities or bodies that current higher education standards are being upheld. Notably, the literature about quality assurance in higher education frequently mentions that upholding standards is not just for the students, but also to satisfy various socio-political and economic institutions (Adegbesan, 2011; Stimac & Katic, 2015). This view has been previously recognised by UNESCO (1998), which declared that quality assurance in higher education should constantly meet new demands from various stakeholders. Also, current research reiterates these views, and they align with significant quality assurance trends in higher education (ASEAN Secretariat, 2016; Lim, 2011; Materu, 2007).

Some differences in academic leaders' perceptions about the factors that promoted quality assurance systems in universities were found in this study. It was argued by some academic leaders at the U-VN that providing adequate physical facilities were key factors for successful quality assurance delivery. According to the literature this perception is very common in Vietnamese universities (UNESCO, 2014b; VN, 2015c). In addition, a few academic leaders at the U-VN viewed that quality assurance in their universities mainly focused on ensuring an input-process-output of the learning processes. As a result, they perceived the quality of teaching and learning to be based on the high quality of students enrolling, relevant curricula, well-qualified teachers, adequate learning and teaching resources and rigorous monitoring. On the other hand, the academic leaders at the SOE-AU considered that ensuring specific courses or curricula were designed in a way to improve the educational experiences of students and their learning outcomes. The academic leaders at the SOE-AU concentrated more on learning outcomes. They believed that learning outcomes were a statement of the attributes and capacities that all students should have achieved on the successful

completion of units and courses. Therefore, learning outcomes contributed to the quality assurance standards that the lecturers used for measuring students' achievements through a variety of assessment instruments during the learning process at the SOE-AU.

Although the findings revealed that the concept of quality assurance was perceived in different ways, there was agreement among the academic leaders over the common purpose of quality assurance in promoting high-quality teaching, learning and student as discussed in the literature review. Quality assurance being perceived in different ways supports Dew's (2009) stance, indicating that the differences in perceptions of quality assurance could be dependent on the positions held by the academic leaders involved, their current context and the physical conditions and culture of their universities. In the next section, statements by the participants from the two universities about quality assurance systems, policies and procedures are compared.

7.3 Comparative study of the quality assurance system: Policies, procedure and practices between the U-VN and the SOE-AU

This section provides a synthesis of the interviews, questionnaires and literature to offer a more detailed comparative commentary on the current quality assurance system in the two university case studies. This is achieved through a discussion of the similarities and differences across seven dimensions: (1) the governmental quality assurance authority structures and national quality assurance policies, (2) the current implementation of quality assurance policies, (3) strategies and methods for quality assurance reviews, (4) quality assurance of teaching and learning, (5) internal and external factors affecting the quality assurance implementation, (6) critical successful approaches to quality assurance development and (7) weaknesses and gaps associated with quality assurance at the U-VN compared to the SOE-AU. Each of the seven main dimensions is considered along with particular sub-dimensions.

7.3.1 Governmental quality assurance authority structures and national quality assurance policies

The findings on the role of governmental quality assurance authorities showed that

authorities such as the Commonwealth Government of Australia, the Australian state and territory governments, or the MoET in Vietnam played important roles in leading quality assurance implementation in their respective universities. Around the role of governmental quality assurance authorities, most academic leaders and staff from both the U-VN and the SOE-AU agreed that national quality assurance bodies required quality assurance processes and formulated various policies for their universities. An important point to mention here is that the national quality assurance bodies were leading both internal and external quality assurance processes in the two university case studies.

Further, the way national quality assurance policies impacted on the current implementation of quality assurance systems in each university case study was considered. The findings here revealed that the current government quality assurance policies in both countries have provided clear guidelines for the realisation of quality assurance systems in their universities. Both academic leaders and staff from the two universities argued that national quality assurance policies were effectively implemented to monitor and encourage the universities to undertake quality improvements. Such national quality assurance policies also helped to guide the universities through external quality assurance assessments with benchmarking and external auditing. The academic leaders from both universities argued that quality assurance implementation in their universities engages with the national quality assurance policies. Thus, national quality assurance policies contributed to the development of quality assurances in the universities. Therefore, the findings in this study confirmed that the national quality assurance policies were effectively implemented in both university case studies.

Regardless of their differences, the findings with regard to the governance authority structures and national quality assurance policies may not be the same due to the differences in the quality assurance models applied in the two university case studies. The findings in Chapter 4 indicated that as a Western country of British origin, the Commonwealth Government of Australia exercised considerable control over quality assurance in their universities through financial measures and adopting concepts and methodologies of quality assurance that were very similar to the UK. In Vietnam, on the other hand, the Vietnamese Government began to address the question of quality

assurance in higher education by adopting concepts and methodologies of quality assurance based on the US quality assurance systems. Consequently, marked differences existed between the quality systems in place in Vietnam and Australia. For example, accreditation is a major process for quality assurance in higher education at the SOE-AU, and accreditation is strongly focused on in the university self-evaluation. However, for the U-VN, self-evaluation was used to establish that the university met certain basic resources and performance criteria, so that the general public recognised that the university met certain minimum current national higher education standards of quality. The self-evaluation undertaken in the SOE-AU was also used to demonstrate adherence to standards required by various stakeholders, such as national and state governments, professional communities and education bodies. In addition, there were four main government and non-government quality assurance bodies in Australia: AQFC, DEEWR, STG and TEQSA. In Vietnam, however, there was only DTEQA, the national quality assurance body that managed quality assurance for all Vietnamese universities. Stanley and Patrick (1998) previously noted that the US and the UK had established quality assurance processes with increasingly common features, but there were also many contrasting features between the two different historical and cultural contexts. As a result, the national differences in applying quality assurance models may have numerous effects on the implementation of quality assurance in each university case study. In the next section, the current implementation of quality assurance policies in the two case studies is compared.

7.3.2 The current implementation of quality assurance policies in the U-VN and the SOE-AU

The findings from document analysis and interview data demonstrated that both the U-VN and the SOE-AU have published a variety of policies that guide quality assurance implementation intended to maintain a high quality of teaching, learning and administration. The findings revealed that most academic participants in the two university case studies realised the importance of both national and university quality assurance policies and how they impacted on their current quality assurance practices. The national quality assurance policies seemingly were realised as a pillar of the publishing quality assurance system, standards and measurements within each

university. At the university level, participants were in agreement that the benefits of the university quality assurance policies were important for improving quality assurance of teaching, learning and student research activities. Therefore, the interview and survey results revealed that the university quality assurance policies were effectively implemented in all the university quality assurance practices.

However, in comparing the effective implementation of quality assurance policies within the two university case studies, there were more differences than similarities in the purpose, development and effectiveness of quality assurance implementation.

Firstly, with regard to the purpose of quality assurance, the findings indicated that quality assurance policies such as the “Academic Quality Management Policy” and the “Academic Quality Assurance Policy” at the SOE-AU were perceived to be directed towards maintaining academic standards such as specific accreditation standards for university self-evaluation, external evaluation and approval. In addition, a majority of the academic leaders at the SOE-AU also indicated that their current quality assurance policies mostly focused on maintaining the high quality of courses/units and providing student services. These policies provided clear guidelines for their academic staff in both teaching and student research activities. The SOE-AU published quality assurance policies that supported students, employers, industry and stakeholders to perform within state-wide collaborative frameworks developed by internal and external bodies such as AQF. In contrast, even though there was agreement that the national quality assurance policies were adequate, the majority of academic leaders at the U-VN were concerned about the weaknesses of the national quality assurance policy and that universities did not publish their own quality assurance policies. Most academic leaders in the U-VN indicated that the lack of autonomy in publishing quality assurance policies was seen to weaken the development of quality assurance policy. For example, the request for quality assurance policies at the U-VN was mainly focused on promoting the achievement of the Vietnamese higher education quality assurance standards through a quality assurance self-evaluation process. Consequently, quality assurance policies were concentrated on responding to the external overarching issue rather than promoting a high quality of teaching and learning processes. The demands of national quality assurance policies for publishing university policies reflected a dimension of quality assurance purpose in the U-VN that required them to meet external standards rather than

establish quality assurance policies suitable to the university.

Secondly, with regard to quality assurance policy development, the findings in this study revealed that the SOE-AU had also published their own quality assurance policies according to nationally and internationally agreed standards established by DEEWR, STAA, AUQA, AQF and international professional guidelines for academic staff. For instance, a characteristic of the Australian quality assurance model allowed lecturers considerable autonomy in setting their own standards, recruiting staff and students, deciding on curricula and examinations, and awarding degrees at each university. These activities also meet effective government regulatory mechanisms throughout the universities. In contrast, the U-VN's internal quality assurance statements only referred to national standards, that is, the Promulgation of Regulations on Tertiary Education Quality Standards developed by the MOET in 2004 and modified in 2007 (MoET, 2007). In Vietnam, the quality assurance policies at the national level were an imperative and directly influence the U-VN's quality assurance policies. This finding supports Lim (2001, p. 382), who concludes that "in developing countries, there is often significant political intervention in the affairs of universities, with much less academic freedom for staff and students of the type treasured in universities in developed countries". As such, in practice, only the Department of Testing and Education Quality Accreditation (DTEQA) managed quality assurance, and required the U-VN to comply with the requirements of the external review. In contrast, in Australia, there were three government bodies and an independent quality audit agency that shared the quality assurance responsibilities. In my view, an independent quality assurance body allows more multi-engagement in the quality assurance process, which aligns with the demands of society.

Thirdly, other differences in the quality assurance policies between the two universities were also evident in the ways in which the policies exerted influence. The responses to the interviews and questionnaires in this study revealed that the great majority of academic leaders and staff in the SOE-AU were satisfied with current national and institutional quality assurance policies that supported teaching, academic program development, student learning and student research activities. In the U-VN, however, the findings in the preceding sections have shown that few academic leaders and academic staff were satisfied with their current national quality assurance policies because they

were not adequate or relevant to the specific characteristics and educational purposes of the U-VN. Additionally, the results of the study showed that the existing higher education standards for all Vietnamese universities should have offered more variety and improved quality standards and indicators to make them more applicable to each university's environment and mission. In the next section, the strategies and methods for quality assurance review in the two universities are compared

7.3.3 Strategies and methods for quality assurance reviews at the U-VN and the SOE-AU

The data collected from document analysis and questionnaires indicated that the strategies and methods for quality assurance review were central to promoting quality assurance implementation at both the U-VN and the SOE-AU. Both universities have set their own quality assurance strategies, including the university's mission, vision, strategic plans and evaluation methods for promoting high-quality educational standards.

The findings from document analysis indicated that the mission and vision statements of the universities were the most common specific quality assurance models of the two university case studies. They were clear and concise. Mission statements in each university provided the purposes of the institution and identified specific university activities. For example, the findings indicated that the SOE-AU had adopted a quality assurance system that met the demands of regional requirements and national/international quality assurance standards to offer the highest quality education for students. This also reflected respect for the autonomy of a university and guaranteed the advancement of their international quality assurance requirements. In contrast, the U-VN's mission showed that it had not yet achieved the level of regional or international higher education standards. The U-VN was in the process of building their quality assurance system to meet the international higher education quality assurance standards. Regardless of the content of the university mission and vision statements, the findings showed that they were another important element for strategic planning in each university case study. They defined the universities future, which reflected the hopes, dreams and opportunities of each university. As findings revealed, both quality assurance systems were applied in each university to be consistent with

the criteria and priorities mandated by their respective national governments and the nature and function of each university. Further, within the results-driven environment and the characteristics of each university, the setting of the university's mission, vision and approaches to quality assurance review were seen to be contextually bounded.

Regardless of the quality assurance system review adopted, a commitment to a systematic review had been set in both universities. Both universities operate on a five-year cycle that involved annual monitoring of goals and strategies against outcomes. Quality assurance system reviews involved some kind of benchmarking and a set of existing national quality criteria. Thus, the quality assurance system reviews facilitated explicit judgments about the teaching, learning, research and other university services in order to meet or improve on set standards.

The methods employed to undertake a quality assurance review within both universities included self-evaluation and external-evaluation. The main purpose of a quality assurance review was to provide opportunities or solutions to address the strengths and weaknesses of the university's service delivery by focusing on improving or maintaining a course or unit through annual enhancement plans. However, it was agreed that self-evaluation in the U-VN was concurrent with external evaluation and exactly the same criteria were used as defined by the Promulgation of Regulations on Tertiary Education Quality Standards launched by MoET in 2014 (MoET, 2014c), which included sixty-three criteria and was commonly applied to all Vietnamese universities. The research participants argued that the individualism and unique characteristics of the U-VN have been not considered, because the same criteria were applied for both internal and external review processes. The respondents felt that the independence and autonomy of both external and internal quality assurance evaluations were not adversely affected in the U-VN's quality assurance self-report.

For the SOE-AU, on the other hand, both internal and external evaluation processes were highly independent and autonomous, aligned with the SOE-AU's strategic priorities and are integral to the academic activities of the SOE-AU. The SOE-AU used peer-review and formative assessment that was focused on overall course reviews, including the quality of teaching and learning. Such assessments included

elements like student perceptions and official reviews by relevant professional, accrediting and employer groups (AU, 2015a). In addition, there were a range of methods to maintain the quality assurance of teaching and learning, including graduate and current student responses to questionnaires, academic committee reviews, chairing of teaching reviews and so on. As in many Australian universities, at the end of each unit and course, the SOE-AU had mandatory student feedback utilising online questionnaires for evaluation of teaching according to criteria with standardised questions across all units to gather and summarise evaluations of the course as a whole. In contrast, the MoET in Vietnam did not ask the university for teaching evaluations through student feedback were not conducted routinely for courses or units at the U-VN.

It should be noted that both national governments and the two case studies have established effective external and internal quality assurance processes that were aimed at continuous improvement of teaching, learning, research and other university services. There were quality assurance policies, strategies and evaluation methods where a self-evaluation was typically conducted in each of the universities as the first step of internal quality assurance. Peer-evaluation or external-evaluation was a second quality assurance process adopted by the relevant government-authorized agencies or professional teams external to each university with appropriate experience and expertise. A university quality assurance report was the final step, with publication depending on the current quality assurance requirements in each university. In the following section, the quality assurance of teaching and learning in the two universities is compared in greater depth.

7.3.4 Views on the quality assurance of teaching and learning at the U-VN and the SOE-AU

In this study, the quality of teaching and learning was regarded as a central element of the quality assurance systems in both the U-VN and the SOE-AU. This section focuses on the major findings concerning the current approaches for maintaining the high quality of teaching and learning. The perceptions of the academic leaders and staff about the quality assurance of teaching and learning identified on three main areas: academic program development, the quality of the teaching and learning

processes and the quality of the academic staff.

With regard to the academic leaders being expected to develop the quality assurance of academic programs, most academic leaders from the U-VN and the SOE-AU stated that academic program development should be designed consistent with current national and university quality assurance policies. Academic leaders in both universities also perceived that meeting both social needs and viability benchmarks was central to the development of high-quality academic programs. The next concern was about the use of student assessment methods. The findings showed that in order to ensure quality teaching and learning improvement, the universities encouraged student assessment using a variety of methods to reflect the expected learning outcomes. Finally, in the two university case studies, the findings showed that all new academic programs had input from external professionals to encourage good practice in teaching and learning. Although there were some common views on ensuring the quality of teaching and learning in the two universities, academic leaders at the SOE-AU, ensured that curriculum/course design structures and content show the expected learning outcomes from the student learning experiences. Thus, quality assurance of academic programs was maintained.

To ensure the quality of teaching and learning processes, most academics from the two universities stated that the common approaches employed in promoting quality teaching and learning processes entailed monitoring, assessment of academic staff by faculty heads or student evaluation. In each university, regular academic meetings were widely used to promote quality of teaching and learning. Head of Schools, academic committees, course coordinators or unit coordinators was responsible for teaching and learning issues. The influences of regular academic meetings were strongly argued for in each university case study. Also, student feedback is seen as one of the most important and essential methods of teaching evaluation.

In terms of academic staff quality, the findings from the interview data as presented in Chapters 5 and 6 indicated that the majority of academic leaders at the U-VN and the SOE-AU considered that high-quality lecturers was the single most important learning resource for majority of students. It was important that the lecturers have high qualifications and the necessary skills to deliver the curriculum adequately.

Across both universities, it was considered important for academic staff and students to observe the highest quality in teaching, learning and research to maintain the highest performance. Most academic leaders stated that the commitment and engagement of academic staff and students in maintaining high academic standards was essential for promoting a high quality of teaching and learning. They believed that academic staff and students should be required to commit to high quality, and that it should be sustained and embedded in practice before every academic year commences, and is best accommodated when staff have high qualifications, as frequently mentioned by participants from both universities.

Furthermore, there were some differences between the U-VN and the SOE-AU in the perceptions of academic leaders and staff about expectations of quality assurance of teaching and learning, as discussed below.

A marked feature evident in the SOE-AU was the monitoring of teaching and learning to achieve the highest learning outcomes and appropriate experiences for learners. The findings in Chapter 6 showed that a majority of participants from the SOE-AU considered learning outcomes to be vital for ensuring high-quality teaching and learning. They also believed that the SOE-AU should have comprehensive academic programs in which teaching reviews informed the learning communities. For instance, conducting teaching reviews through student evaluation and external peer-feedback could positively affect curriculum development, graduate attributes, internationalisation, governance structures and assessment requirements. At the U-VN, distinct enhancements of teaching approaches, benchmarking of curriculum outcomes and regular checking of input-process-output of the teaching and learning processes were considered to be crucial by academic leaders. The consequences of these concerns for the U-VN have been a greater focus on curriculum development and teaching and learning processes and less focus on ensuring the quality of learning outcomes. In addition, the findings in this study highlighted that maintaining teaching and learning processes was also a significant element of the MoET's policies that controlled the teaching and learning criteria at the U-VN.

Secondly, the findings revealed that the U-VN had focused on class observation as an appropriate method for evaluating learning and teaching, with only a few courses

or units being evaluated through student feedback. This compared with teaching evaluations at the SOE-AU, where all courses and units were required to be peer-reviewed and subjected to student evaluations. It is noted that student evaluations of academic teaching staff performance was a popular approach and reported by a majority of participants at SOE-AU. Brennan and William (2017) agree that feedback from students has always played an important role in the maintenance of quality and standards in higher education because it helps lecturers to improve and refine their teaching. In addition, collecting and using student feedback helped to enhance students' experience of learning and teaching and contributed to the monitoring and review of quality assurance standards. However, teaching evaluation through student feedback was not found to be a popular approach at the U-VN. Some study participants from the U-VN mentioned that student feedback took time and much paperwork. Consequently, only a few unit lecturers had conducted student feedback to support teaching evaluations at the U-VN.

The findings indicated that in both institutions there was evidence of efforts to promote high-quality teaching and learning. The reasons for the different views about quality assurance of teaching and learning in each university arose from the fact that these approaches were based on each university's mission, vision and resource. In the next section, the factors affecting quality assurance implementation in the two case studies are compared.

7.3.5 Internal and external factors affecting the quality assurance implementation at the U-VN and the SOE-AU

The findings indicated that both specific internal university factors and external environmental factors influenced the adoption and practice of quality assurance across each university.

Internally, the results revealed that there was three negative factors that should be considered for the quality assurance implementation in university case studies: the lack of human resources, inadequate physical resources and heavy workload. Firstly, lack of human resources was stated by the U-VN as a major hindrances to effective quality assurance implementation. Academic leaders concerns included the absence of quality

assurance experts or staff with diverse professional experience at the U-VN. Secondly, many academic leaders in this study argued that inadequate physical resources at the universities were not always perceived as being conducive to implementation of quality assurance. This factor was seen as burden that adversely affected quality assurance implementation at the U-VN. Finally, a marked negative factor perceived by the participants was heavy workloads mainly caused by the larger number of units requiring approvals and the limited time given to moderate the teaching processes successfully. Many interviews at the two universities pointed out that the quality assurance process required a marked amount of paperwork and time, which was considered an additional workload for both administrative and academic staff.

Externally, the findings revealed that there were some negative factors that acted as a barrier for quality assurance implementation in the two university case studies. One factor was that the university participants' perceptions about the quality assurance policies were somewhat negative with regard to implementation. It was perceived that there was a lack of appreciation at the national level of the burden of quality assurance policy implementation.

Participants from the U-VN reported negative aspects of policies as not being fully specific to purposes, ineffective strategic implementation and gaps in international higher education quality assurance standards. Additionally, most of the U-VN academic leaders argued that the current quality assurance policies give little attention to the effectiveness of teaching. Thus, quality assurance implementation is seen to have only a slight direct impact on the day-to-day practices of academic leaders, staff and students. Only a few of participants in this study did not think the quality assurance policies were problematic at both national and university levels, nor did they see the need to reduce them. The lack of academic freedom, interest and autonomy were a marked problem at the U-VN, and the participants from U-VN were mainly concerned with a lack of policies and the lack of relevance of some national policies to the U-VN context. For example, there was national quality assurance policies that could not be applied to the university's specific quality assurance purposes. Accordingly, the current Vietnamese Government's national quality assurance policies were not specifically relevant to quality assurance implementation in the U-VN. Almost all academic leaders and staff tended to prefer

specific professional standards and discipline requirements that would directly apply to their teaching, learning and research rather than government-driven quality assurance. They wanted the government or the quality assurance agencies to give their universities more autonomy in making quality assurance policies as well as producing a localised quality assurance system. This raised concerns about the very common issue of lack of autonomy and academic freedom in delivering quality policies. Studies by Lim (2001) suggested that lack of autonomy and academic freedom in universities in developing countries could lead to unjustified claims of quality assurance in many universities.

At the SOE-AU, the academic leaders and staff participants were mainly concerned with some negative aspects of policy implementation such as academic staff commitment to the delivery of quality assurance processes as well as workload and time demands. Leaders and staff at the SOE-AU noted some faced negative aspects, such as some quality assurance policies not being recognised by all academic staff or some academic staff perceiving that they did not have control over policies. Therefore, although there were perceptions that comprehensive quality assurance policies at both the national and institutional level would make quality assurance implementation more effective, it was doubtful that all the SOE-AU academic staff would be committed to following the policies. One possible explanation is that the quality assurance mode in Australia allowed each university considerable autonomy to decide on the quality assurance standards within their academic environment, leading to a more localised application, rather than national attention to quality assurance policies. Academic leaders at the SOE-AU were also concerned about some negative aspects of quality assurance policies in relation to the academic staff research workload. They recommended that instead of research activities being 20% to 40% of total workload, it should make up 40% of total academic staff workload to promote more effective in their teaching and learning.

Furthermore, the excessive demands on resources and time in both universities may have reflected the particular circumstances at the specific time of data collection. It seemed that quality assurance takes considerable time, and has often been seen as cumbersome by many participants in this study. Under such circumstances, it is very difficult to expect the efficient implementation of quality assurance mechanisms in

the two universities. Quality assurance should be efficiently provided and workload requirements must be reduced. The government quality assurance bodies should pay more attention to feedback from universities.

It should be noted that in each case, different university factors affected quality assurance implementation and, therefore, each university had different priorities and approaches to tackling their issues. In the next section, the statements about the approaches for maintaining quality assurance in the two universities are outlined and compared.

7.3.6 Critical successful approaches to quality assurance development at the U-VN and the SOE-AU

In this study, I found that the participants from the two universities had both similarities and differences in their perceptions about the approaches leading to successful quality assurance development in their universities. According to the participants, the implementation processes for effective quality assurance in the two universities focused on three main aspects: providing appropriate quality assurance policies, enhancing the relevance of quality assurance implementation, and enhancing the provision of quality assurance resources and improved working conditions for academic staff. The outcomes are briefly summarised in Table 7.1:

Table 7.1 shows some differences in the participants' perceptions about the development of quality assurance processes in the two university case studies. Most of the academic participants at the U-VN argued that development of quality assurance policies and resources for quality assurance delivery were needed for maintaining quality assurance. In contrast, the SOE-AU's approach to quality assurance development was focused more on providing curricula and curriculum evaluations informed by local regional, national and international standards.

Table 7.1: Successful approaches to quality assurance development in the two university case studies

Approaches at the U-VN	Approaches at the SOE-AU
<p>(1) Providing quality assurance policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging multiple stakeholders to design and provide quality assurance policies • Developing policies based on democratic values, transparency, and co-operation. 	<p>(1) Contextually relevant performance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking into account the genuine interests of students and relevant stakeholders • Engaging the efforts of other relevant activities, such providing general administrative and staff support services to ensure academic integrity • Matching standards of teaching programs and other school activities with external quality assurance and international higher education standards.
<p>(2) Providing information from quality assurance systems management to academic staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting feedback from multiple relevant stakeholders • Using student evaluations, especially alumni and the labour market to identify quality assurance improvements • Providing quality awareness measures aimed at improving insights and strengths and explaining weaknesses • Engaging and providing information about all university activities, which include all specific criteria for maintaining a high quality of teaching, learning, research and other services • Creating a quality assurance culture within the university. 	<p>(2) Providing international curricula:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing special and specific curricula in the context of the global higher education area • Measuring curriculum based on both national and global agendas.

Table 7.1: (Continued)

<p>(3) Considering the provision of quality assurance resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing well-qualified staff training programs and a high quality of academic staff • Improving teaching capabilities of the lecturers • Providing library resources, teaching materials and individual workplaces • Increasing opportunities for student support services. 	<p>(3) Considering the provision of working conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and cutting down the workload of academic staff • Engaging academics to follow quality assurance policies in teaching and learning • Cutting down the excessive workload and providing an effective timetable at work for academic staff.
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The study findings in Chapter 5 revealed that the U-VN had faired poorly on quality assurance policies, hence academic leaders were concerned about the need to review quality assurance policies with engagement from relevant stakeholders, especially with assistance from international quality assurance experts. More specifically, providing high-quality human resources at both the national quality assurance body and university level was a marked participant observation, as the data analysis of the U-VN information showed that a common issue was a lack of experience and knowledge of quality assurance affairs. To maintain quality assurance, there was a need for training at all levels, from the academic leaders to the academic staff and other relevant people who worked in different parts of the university.

Another significant aspect mentioned was that the U-VN should have access to basic infrastructure such as excellent library resources, teaching materials and individual lecturer workplaces. These could promote the successful implementation of quality assurance teaching and learning within the U-VN. A lack of human resources and poor physical resources were not a concern at the SOE-AU, and there was an appropriate environment for maintaining quality teaching and learning that focused on international quality assurance trends. The SOE-AU participants viewed the school as an institution that should have improved accountabilities for meeting the

regional, national and international higher education standards. Finally, the SOE-AU should encourage academic staff to respond to quality assurance policies through stronger staff engagement. In the next section, the weaknesses and gaps associated with quality assurance are identified.

7.3.7 Weaknesses and gaps associated with quality assurance at the U-VN compared to the SOE-AU

A deeper comparison between the two universities identified four gaps within the quality assurance system at the U-VN: single quality assurance agency engagement, inappropriate quality assurance policies, inadequate resources for carrying out quality assurance and limited quality assurance review methods.

Single quality assurance agency engagement: The external quality assurance agency was described as ineffective in promoting quality assurance implementation at the U-VN. The findings indicated that only a single quality assurance agency in Vietnam, known as DTEQA, directed policies for higher education standards. This agency provided accreditation and monitored the quality assurance processes for all Vietnamese universities. As a result, this single body for ensuring quality assurance may not have been able to meet the diverse demands from a number of universities on behalf of their various stakeholders. In my view, having only a single quality assurance agency for all universities in Vietnam means that it is unlikely to be able to meet the new demands from various universities, as the quality assurance process requires a large amount of time and effort.

Inappropriate quality assurance policies: As noted in the preceding section, DTEQA's policies had a direct influence on the quality assurance policies and procedures at the U-VN. In this way, the lack of local autonomy and academic freedom within the U-VN was evident. The findings of the study also showed that poor policies and unclear guidelines could be adduced as inhibitors to smooth implementation of quality assurance at the U-VN. Currently, the Promulgation of Regulations on Tertiary Education Quality Standards launched by MoET in 2014 (MoET, 2014c) commonly applies to all Vietnamese universities, which is not working well, according to a U-VN respondent. They did not have the desired impact

on demands from various stakeholders, which had led to unclear quality assurance standards that are inappropriate and inadequate for a specific university's mission. Hence, the participants at the U-VN believed that quality assurance standards should take into account contextual university factors. According to Dill (2007), each university should make realistic choices about what standards are possible, and such choices should be informed by their university context. In addition, the Vietnamese Government has proposed too many different models in too short a time period instead of implementing a system according to the nature of higher education and each university's own mission (ASEAN Secretariat, 2016).

Inadequate quality assurance resources: According to Asiyai (2013), quality assurance in a university mainly depends on viable teaching and learning resources offered by the university. However, adequate resources for delivering high-quality teaching programs in a developing institution such as the U-VN have not been available and this has created challenges. This research has shown that a lack of physical resources, such as an effective library, science laboratories and personal workplaces, all require urgent attention if the U-VN is to achieve their quality objectives. In terms of the research, both academic leaders and staff argued that the acute shortage of educational facilities had led to a decline in the quality of teaching and learning at the U-VN. Therefore, to successfully deliver quality programs, it was suggested that adequate teaching and learning resources should be maintained. It was argued that delivering quality programs when working with a lack of suitable resources is unrealistic.

Limited quality assurance review methods: The analysis documents and questionnaire data demonstrated that self-evaluation was widely recognised as the most effective component of the quality assurance strategy at the U-VN. However, a U-VN self-evaluation report based on the same quality assurance standards was informally used for both internal evaluation and external evaluation. I suggest that both self-evaluation and external evaluation were based on the same policy. The Promulgation of Regulations on Tertiary Education Quality Standards, launched by MoET in 2014 (MoET, 2014c), includes sixty-three criteria and was commonly applied to all Vietnamese university self-evaluations and external evaluations. Consequently, individualism and the uniqueness of the U-VN's teaching, learning,

research and other university activities standards were neglected in both internal and external quality assurance evaluation processes. For instance, some benefits from self-evaluation, such as dealing with special teaching and learning purposes, were not displayed within the U-VN. Furthermore, information supporting a quality assurance system review was still limited. The SOE-AU has published reports of the quality of their units and courses that include students' feedback plus regional, national and international requirements; however, the same cannot be said for the U-VN. At the U-VN, the published information on the quality of units or structures was mainly reposted under the higher authority of MoET. Thus, the responses from students to regional and international demands were not considered.

The findings obtained in this study demonstrated that quality assurance, particularly quality assurance based on governance structures, policies and resources, were major concerns at the U-VN. Addressing these concerns were critical to a new and younger university such as the U-VN.

7.4 Summary

Comparing the quality assurance systems between the two universities based on documents, interviews and questionnaires has shown evidence of many similarities and differences between the two universities. Both universities stated that their quality assurance system was integral to the processes for maintaining standards and enhancing the quality of teaching, learning and student research activities. However, one marked difference recognised was that, compared to the U-VN, the SOE-AU had experience with the application of the quality assurance process and had adequate resources to undertake the necessary steps in the process. As a result, the SOE-AU's quality assurance system was closely linked to the national conditions and national quality assurance of higher education standards, whereas the U-VN was undergone major changes with a step-by-step approach to enhancing and developing its quality assurance system. In the next chapter, the conclusions, implications and recommendations of this thesis are provided.

Chapter 8 Conclusions, implications and recommendations

8.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions about quality assurance of eleven academic leaders and all academic staff at the U-VN and the SOE-AU. The leading research question informing the study was: how is quality assurance understood and implemented in undergraduate education at the U-VN and the SOE-AU? In pursuing this question, I employed mixed methods to capture in-depth perceptions about quality assurance concepts in each institution, influencing factors and approaches taken to improve quality assurance in each university. The study also provided a cross comparison between the two case study universities.

This chapter presents a discussion of the study's key findings, significance, implications, and recommendations for future research. It is divided into four parts beyond this introduction. Section 8.2 is a summary of the key findings in relation to the research sub-questions and provides a discussion of the immediate implications of the study results in relation to the two case studies. The third section presents the contributions this study makes to the existing literature on quality assurance in the university sector and potential quality assurance reform processes for the case studies. The fourth section identifies the limitations of the study and directions for future research. The last section offers concluding remarks.

8.2 Summary of the key findings in relation to the research questions

It was the expectation that eliciting the statements from participants would lead to an understanding of quality assurance policies and practices in the two university case studies. Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 recorded responses of the participants' to the interviews, and questionnaires, and drew on the quality assurance literature,

documents and policies. The findings were based on the statements of academic leaders and staff from the U-VN and the SOE-AU, and were consistent with the current literature and theory. This section provides a summary of the findings in relation to each of the research sub-questions.

8.2.1 Research sub-question 1

What is the nature of quality assurance in universities in Vietnam and Australia?

The literature review on quality assurance in universities indicated that in any context, and specifically any university environment, quality assurance plays a crucial role in maintaining high educational standards (Lim, 2001; Mahood et al., 2011; UNESCO, 2014a). However, the nature of the quality assurance system in each nation or university was not always the same due to the different governance structures, specific purposes of quality assurance, review methods and quality assurance standards of each university (Lim, 2001; Materu & Righetti, 2010; UNESCO, 2014c). In the first sub-question, it was sought to identify the major characteristics of quality assurance systems in the university sector in Vietnam and Australia. The major characteristics evident in the two university case studies are summarised below:

Nature and purpose of quality assurance: This study showed that quality assurance systems in both universities were a key factor that guided participants and played a key role in promoting the quality of education. According to the literature, the purpose of quality assurance is to respond to internal quality assurance (IQA) and external quality assurance (EQA) processes (Dill, 2007; Materu, 2007; Mishra, 2007; UNESCO, 2014c) and this purpose was recognised in the two case study universities. However, the application of a quality assurance system in each university not only ensured a response to the EQA and IQA requirements, but also ensured the university's missions and visions were achieved. A key message running through this study was that to achieve success in quality assurance implementation in universities, quality assurance should demand dedicated participation by relevant stakeholders (students, academic staff, academic leaders and other relevant stakeholders from their universities and

society at large). In addition, quality assurance in universities is needed to gain support and to better understand how to implement quality assurance measures aligned with current higher education standards. Finally, the success of quality assurance implementation requires universities to provide clear quality assurance policies, adequate resources, an effective management system and ultimately, support opportunities for employment of graduates. The purpose of quality assurance systems in a university is to improve teaching, learning and student research activities. In practice, quality assurance can take a variety of forms and purposes that reflect the specific character of each university. The common purpose of the quality assurance systems in the two university case studies was monitoring and promoting quality teaching, learning and student research activities.

Key agencies and organisations involved in quality assurance: Understanding quality assurance systems in universities should involve the understanding of quality assurance key agency structures (Harman et al., 2010; Hou, 2015; Ryan, 2015). According to the previous discussion in Chapter 4, in the two university case studies, the quality assurance agencies were established to manage the quality assurance implementation. The findings of this study confirmed that quality assurance agencies were seen to perform a crucial role in quality assurance monitoring and procedures in universities. However, the study provided evidence that the governance structure of quality assurance agencies was different for the two institutions. For example, in Vietnam, DTEQA was a single national body that directed policies for higher education standards and mandated the quality assurance procedures for all Vietnamese universities. In Australia, there were four relevant agencies: AQFC, DEEWR, TSG, and TEQSA. The AQFC is a non-government body, but it is the most powerful in leading and evaluating quality assurance implementation in Australian universities. Thus, the nature of such quality assurance agency structures may have created differences in the effectiveness of the quality assurance implementation in the two university case studies. For example, the single role of the MoET quality assurance agency in Vietnam cannot meet the new demands from various stakeholders (George, 2011; Westerheijden, Cremonini, & Roelien van Empel, 2010)

Approaches and methods of quality assurance evaluation: The findings of this study supported the literature that a common feature of quality assurance system

approaches in universities are both EQA and IQA processes (Dill, 2007; Mishra, 2007; UNESCO, 2014c). Likewise, these internal and external quality assurance elements were found to be major elements for quality assurance implementation in the two case study universities. The findings from the data analysis indicated that the EQA process was either prepared or promoted by government usually through government-authorised quality assurance agencies such as GDETA in Vietnam and AUQA in Australia. In contrast, the IQA process was organised and implemented within the university itself.

With regard to quality assurance evaluation methods, as discussed in the literature review, a self-evaluation method is commonly the first step in quality assurance procedures (Becket & Brookes, 2005; Croxford et al., 2009; Harman et al., 2000). The self-evaluation method allows a university to supply appropriate information about itself through both IQA and EQA processes. The findings here identified that the main quality assurance evaluation method used by Vietnamese universities was self-evaluation. Self-evaluation focuses on the internal quality assurance procedures incorporated in the Vietnamese higher education standards to achieve university objectives. In Australian universities, peer-review was the main method used, and this method focuses on monitoring the quality of teaching and learning processes and use of the AQF and TEQSA as the key references for standards. However, the findings of the study indicated that overall the differences in choosing quality assurance review methods such as self-evaluation or peer-review did not seem to fundamentally influence the IQA in the quality assurance review for each university. With regard to the data gathering instruments used in quality assurance, a quality assurance self-report or report of an audit was the first instrument. The common features of these identify strengths and weaknesses and offer suggested solutions in each area of weakness with reference to the current national quality assurance higher education standards. This finding supports Harman and Meek (2000, p. 5) who explained that, “good management practice requires that all universities should have in place appropriate internal quality assurance and improvement plans, and submission of these to some outside body provides useful discipline for institutions to keep plans up to date”.

Quality assurance system reviews, criteria, standards and outcomes of quality assurance mechanisms: As discussed in the literature review, the quality assurance

reviews, quality assurance criteria, standards and outcomes rely on the context of each university (Lenn, 2004; Nicholson, 2011; Vlăsceanu et al., 2004). In this study, I found that various quality assurance criteria and outcomes had been implemented in reviews by the two universities. The findings showed that a commitment to systematic reviews had been established in the quality assurance systems in both universities. The reviews operated on a five-year cycle that involved annual monitoring of goals and strategies against outcomes. Quality assurance systemic evaluations involved some kind of benchmarking against a set of existing national quality criteria. Criteria for all Vietnamese universities included ten standards: (1) institution mission, (2) organisation and management, (3) training programs and activities, (4) academic staff, (5) learning, (6) research, (7) international cooperation, (8) library, (9) learning equipment and other facilities, and (10) financial resources. There were two possible outcomes: satisfactory or unsatisfactory. In the Australian higher education framework the standards included: (1) student participation and attainment, (2) learning environment, (3) teaching, (4) research and research training, (5) governance, accountabilities and representation, and (6) information and information management. Each of these aspects of educational provision was graded on a four-point scale: unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good or excellent. The findings here show that achieving current higher education standards was a common objective of quality assurance purposes in each university.

As discussed in the literature review, the efficiency and effectiveness of these quality assurance criteria in universities depended on the appropriate stratification, commitments and capacities of each university (Arsovski, 2007; Hou, 2015). In addition, an appropriate quality assurance system and clear measurements such as utility, feasibility, propriety or accuracy standards were also required for each university (Westerheijden et al., 2010). The findings in this study indicated that the most important aspect for successful quality assurance standards in the two case studies was having standards that were appropriate and truly reflected the needs of quality assurance in each university case study. The findings revealed that Australia had established a quite complex system of criteria in all aspects of the country's higher education and these fit the specific situation of each local university. Moreover, the findings revealed that the current Vietnamese quality assurance standards did not reflect appropriate stratification of the higher education system,

because the specific situations of local universities had not been a focus. Therefore, the quality assurance standards in Vietnam should be developed to suitably align with different contexts, including the mission and vision of each university.

It is clear that to understand the quality assurance systems in universities one should start from factors such as governance structures, purposes of quality assurance, review methods and the quality assurance standards of each university. These factors can be viewed as the key dimensions of the quality assurance mechanisms required for quality assurance implementation in each university. However, the nature of quality assurance in universities varies according to the specific context of the institution such as national quality assurance standards, quality assurance agency structures and quality assurance implementation in each university. These findings were somewhat anticipated since quality assurance in universities has been previously considered to be significantly related to the varied contextual settings of universities (Lim, 2011; Stimac & Katic, 2015; Vlăsceanu et al., 2007; Westerheijden et al., 2007; Williams & Cappuccini-Ansfield, 2007). From my experiences and the findings of the study, it is clear that quality assurance should be recognised through quality assurance processes at a course, faculty, institutional and national level. Quality assurance implementation in universities also needs to be clearly relevant for the university institutions, students and societies.

8.2.2 Research sub-question 2

How do the participants view quality assurance in the U-VN and the SOE-AU?

A brief review of the literature on the way that university academic leaders and staff perceive about quality assurance illustrated how important it is to clarify understandings of quality assurance. This is because the participants' perceptions of quality assurance have a potential impact on quality assurance policy developments and implementation in each university (Harvey & Williams, 2010; Houston, 2008). In the second sub-question, I sought to understand quality assurance through study participant interviews. Here I found that an important dimension to understanding quality assurance was the consideration of relevant quality assurance activities.

However, understanding of quality assurance as a concept in universities proved elusive. The findings indicated different perspectives were held by the participants. While an analysis of the literature in this study did not find a single definition of quality assurance to specifically understand quality assurance in universities, the study highlighted the consequences when the participants had different views. The findings indicated that participants identified five categories of understanding. These categories defined quality assurance as:

- an essential management tool used mainly to provide the highest quality of teaching and learning processes
- an internal and external systematic process used to promote educational services to satisfy relevant authorities
- a management system used to provide information for relevant stakeholders;
- a commitment to use a set of current higher education standards demanded by relevant stakeholders
- a standardization of requirements to be used in providing adequate physical facilities appropriate for each course or unit offered to meet the needs for teaching, learning and student research activities.

I argue that the participants' views on quality assurance relied heavily on the objectives of the participants involved, such as the current relevant quality assurance policies, university conditions and contexts, participants' employment positions, and the quality assurance resources available. The analysis of literature in Chapter 2 indicated that many scholars did not offer a single definition of quality assurance (Mishra, 2007; Ryan, 2015; Westerheijden et al., 2007; Woodhouse, 1999b). The findings also highlighted the variations among participants who held different quality assurance views in their universities. However, the findings of this study confirmed that quality assurance in the universities was most commonly understood as a management tool to ensure a high quality of teaching, learning and research. To achieve quality assurance purposes, both academic leaders and staff should know and understand the importance of quality assurance in promoting high quality teaching, learning, research and other relevant university services. This finding supports what Alexandrou (2013, p. 12) observed in his study, that "Quality assurance refers to the procedures, processes or systems used by a higher education institution to safeguard

and improve the quality of its education and other activities”. Furthermore, there was an expectation that the efforts of all relevant stakeholders within the university should contribute towards seeking improvements in teaching and learning performances in both universities. In total, understanding quality assurance concepts is most revealing in terms of delivering quality assurance because the perceptions of quality assurance have a potential impact on quality assurance policy developments and practices in a university when it comes to institutional implementation (Giertz, 2000).

8.2.3 Research sub-question 3

How are quality assurance policies and practices evidenced in the case study universities?

As mentioned in the literature, national quality assurance policy plays a significant role in the quality assurance implementation of universities everywhere (Kis, 2005a). In the third sub-question, I explored each participant’s statement about the current quality assurance policies and practices in the two university case studies through interviews and questionnaire surveys. The findings indicated that the quality assurance policies were perceived as a critical factor for ensuring quality assurance implementation. This study revealed that at the university level, both case studies had followed their national quality assurance policies to publish their own quality assurance policies. This finding provides support for both Madden (2014) and Materu and Righetti (2010), who state that national policies have directly affected the publishing of university level quality assurance policies to promote quality assurance system implementation in universities.

With regard to the way quality assurance policy development occurs in universities, according to Westerheijden et al. (2007), the university should have clear policies and procedures for their programs and awards. The findings of this study demonstrated that quality assurance policy development in the case studies was conducted by both consultancy outside the university and a university committee structure operating at different levels within the university. In addition, evidence was presented that both the U-VN and the SOE-AU consulted with other relevant

professional bodies outside the university to develop their quality assurance policies and this is key to the success of these policies. This consultation also promotes more effective quality assurance policy implementation. In this study, I identified that the effectiveness of quality assurance policy implementation was very different in each university case study. Autonomy, workloads and the available quality assurance resources were the key factors that troubled both university case studies. The main differences and applications to these issues are elaborated in the response to the research sub-questions 5 and 6.

8.2.4 Research sub-question 4

What are the influential factors concerned and how does each institution approach and enhance quality assurance?

Understanding the quality assurance system of a university involves accounting for the contextual factors that shape each system. The major influencing factors for quality assurance implementation are argued by UNESCO (2014b) and Materu (2007). They suggested both internal and external factors have marked influence on the success of quality assurance implementation in universities. The major factors and approaches to quality assurance development in the two universities are summarised below.

Major influencing factors: This study presented evidence that the influencing factors were intricately linked to conditions both inside and outside each university. Firstly, all participants considered that adequate quality assurance policies and policy commitments were challenging in their universities. For example, the participants at the U-VN identified that the poor quality assurance policies had a negative influence on implementation. At the SOE-AU the lack of commitment to implementation of quality assurance policies by some academic staff was highlighted as a significant concern. Secondly, inadequate working conditions for academic staff and limited university resources for the delivery of quality assurance outcomes were found in the U-VN. For example, the lack of quality assurance resources such as private working places for academic staff, teaching and learning materials and government funding

were major problems facing U-VN. Although university resources were not a problem at the SOE-AU, participants identified quality assurance practices as too bureaucratic, requiring early attention to priorities such as course approval and peer-review processes. Heavy workloads were also seen as a major issue that influenced quality assurance implementation at the SOE-AU.

It was likely in the U-VN case study that, lack of resources was typical of developing country contexts. This underpins why both academic leaders and staff from the U-VN mentioned quality assurance resources as a requirement for successful quality assurance implementation. Further, these findings in the two case universities appear to be largely consistent with various key studies on quality assurance contextual factors (Hayden & Thiep, 2007; Kerr & Mapanje, 2002; Martin & Stella, 2007), university capacities (Lim, 2001; Sursock, 2011a) and actual quality assurance practices (Bates & Poole, 2003; Brookhart, 2001; Pule, 2014; Rattananuntapat, 2015). Hence, understanding of such factors is most revealing in terms of promoting quality assurance policies and opportunities for improvement: Firstly, national policies and higher education trends have significantly affected the delivery of quality assurance in universities (Hayden & Thiep, 2007; Martin & Stella, 2007; Sursock, 2011a). Secondly, university capacity is a factor cited as critical to the successful implementation of a quality assurance system in universities (OECD, 2012). Lastly, successful quality assurance implementation needs appropriate resources (Lim, 2001).

Approaches to promote quality assurance: Arsovski (2007) has suggested that there are a variety of approaches to promote quality assurance in higher education including providing documented policies and procedures, monitoring academic programs, enacting student evaluations, promoting quality assurance of teaching staff and providing resources for training, student support and information systems. Supporting Arsovski (2007), the findings here have shown a number of approaches that had been adopted in the two university case studies based on the status of quality assurance systems and the need for quality assurance in each university. These specific approaches are relevant for adoption, implementation and sustainability of quality assurance initiatives in both developed and developing country university contexts.

The participants from the U-VN indicated that the quality assurance policies developed there could be seen as a critical element for promoting quality assurance at the university. The participants also suggested that development policies should involve engaging multiple stakeholders to design and provide appropriate quality assurance policies and strategies. Such policies need to be based on democratic values, transparency and co-operation aligned with internationally high quality rated institutions. Also, this study showed that quality assurance policies need to be developed in an autonomous environment within the university. This is because the implementation of quality assurance is demanding on the quality, dedication, and integrity of the people who serve as peer-reviewers and the administrators and faculty members who prepare and/or conduct self-evaluations (Materu, 2007). In addition, most participants at the U-VN indicated that an appropriate quality assurance system should be developed with feedback from multiple relevant stakeholders such as employers and students who stood to gain immediate benefit from high quality education. They also believed that providing quality assurance resources should be the main focus, with an emphasis on promoting high-quality human resources.

At the SOE-AU, participants suggested that improving quality assurance should be considered with contextual relevance, especially with regard to the demand for relevant stakeholders, society priorities and international higher education trends. Also, that contextualised features, as integral of quality assurance policies would provide reliable, relevant, procedures for quality assurance by increasing efficiency, effectiveness and enhancing teaching, learning and research. They also believed that the involvement in developing international curricula and combined regional and international professional development projects had been significant ways to promote quality assurance within the SOE-AU. It should be noted here that the development of sound quality assurance policies and evaluation systems through relevant stakeholder feedback and providing effective quality assurance resources are key factors supporting quality assurance implementation in universities.

8.2.5 Research sub-question 5

What are the similarities and differences in the quality assurance policies, and how are they implemented and compared between the U-VN and the SOE-AU?

In this sub-question I sought to identify the similarities and differences between the current quality assurance policies and practices at the two university case study sites. As noted earlier, it has been widely recognised that quality assurance at the SOE-AU is based on experiences over longer period than the U-VN. However, the findings of the study indicated that despite differences in culture, experience and the structure of each national higher education system, there were some common features with regard to the quality practices. Both universities' participants viewed quality assurance as multi-purpose with responsibilities for EQA and IQA processes. More specifically, they applied quality assurance in order to achieve the highest possible quality of teaching and learning and highest education standards possible. However, the findings of the study indicated that there were differences between the two quality assurance systems across three main areas:

The influence of quality assurance policies: This study indicates that at the U-VN, the national quality assurance policies had a strong direct influence on quality assurance policy development and implementation, which seemed to lead to a lack of a sense of autonomy and academic freedom in implementing the quality assurance policies. This finding supports George (2011), who claimed that institutional autonomy and academic freedom are still “sensitive” in Vietnamese education. According to Lim (2001) for successful quality assurance implementation in a university, the university should provide clear policies or procedures. However, the findings of this study showed that poor policies and unclear guidelines could be adduced as inhibitors to the smooth implementation of quality assurance implementation at the U-VN. At the SOE-AU, however, most participants believed that there were comprehensive quality assurance policies and guidelines at both national and institutional levels, which enabled critical success in quality assurance implementation.

Quality assurance for teaching and learning: The findings revealed that quality teaching and learning were central to both university case studies. The distinctiveness and complexity of the quality assurance for teaching and learning were indicative of course developments and evaluations in the two universities.

Firstly, the main difference between the two universities was benchmarking in course and unit development. At the U-VN, the benchmarking was mainly focused on the curriculum development processes. For example, all course curricula were provided for academic staff, including ongoing professional development curricula. Also, the application of curricula to meet the requirements of advanced academic program levels from notable universities in the Asian region were evident. Most university academic participants indicated that improving quality assurance of teaching and learning through accessing regional and internal quality assurance standards was still in process at the U-VN. At the SOE-AU, on the other hand, courses or units were developed and enhanced by providing the highest quality learning experiences for their students based on a range of international sources such as international quality assurance standards.

Secondly, the teaching evaluation benchmarks were different in the U-VN and the SOE-AU. The U-VN set out teaching evaluations that required review through the academic community, regular faculty meetings and in-class observations. At SOE-AU, on the other hand, student feedback through online questionnaires and peer-reviews were popular and regular methods used in teaching and learning evaluation. However, the study also revealed evidence that the benchmarking for teaching and learning focused on the quality of curricula and teaching resources at the U-VN rather than the needs of students and learning outcomes, as was evident at the SOE-AU. An important point to mention here is that these differences in the participants' views about quality assurance of teaching and learning may have related to their existing academic quality assurance policies and also university teaching and learning goals. It is my view that the university and stakeholders within a university should be clear about the various demands of quality teaching and learning, and this needs clarity to be maintained consistently.

The availability of quality assurance resources: The findings indicated that quality resources were an influential factor for quality assurance implementation in both

universities studied. As shown the lack of physical resources such as an extensive modern library, science laboratories and personal workplaces, required urgent attention if the U-VN was to achieve the objectives of its quality assurance development. The majority of participants from the U-VN stated that the acute shortage of educational facilities had led to a decline in the quality of teaching and learning at the U-VN. Whereas, quality assurance resources were highly evident at the SOE-AU. Many of the necessary conditions for successful quality assurance implementation were missing at the U-VN, which resulted in the quality assurance policies and practices being difficult to achieve.

An important note is that successful quality assurance implementation in universities relies on sound quality assurance policies, key performance indicators in teaching, learning and research and the availability of quality assurance resources. These are key factors that explain why quality assurance differs from university to university.

8.2.6 Research sub-question 6

What recommendations might be appropriate from an analysis of Australian quality assurance evident in government policies, documents and quality assurance practices at the SOE-AU that are likely to develop quality assurance for Vietnamese universities in general and the quality assurance system at the U-VN in particular?

The quality assurance literature in universities indicates that the implementation of quality assurance in universities across different countries offers both convergence and diversity (Lim, 2011; Madden, 2014). According to Billing (2004) quality assurance frameworks can be applied in different cultures and higher education systems with different levels of autonomy. In addition, in the current era, characterised by globalisation and integration, the context of Vietnamese universities is, somewhat, similar to that of Australian universities. The comparison of the quality assurance policies and practices of the two case studies, revealed that quality assurance policies and practices in Australia, and at the SOE-AU in particular could provide some useful insights for the Vietnamese Government, universities and the U-VN.

For policy makers and MoET at the government level: Four recommendations can be identified for improving quality assurance at the national level:

1. As noted in the discussion in Chapter 4, Vietnam does not have a “National Qualifications Framework” yet because the development of a higher education management performance indicator system is still underway. The current quality assurance system is mainly copied from the US and improving the quality assurance system is still in process. It is not effectively responsive to the national level, market needs or specific university institutions. The main implication here is that the Vietnamese Government should establish an effective national qualifications framework for higher education by conducting a tracer survey and regular consultations with stakeholders, universities and current students to adjust to the needs of Vietnamese society and university contexts. The publishing of a national quality framework could make the higher education system in Vietnam more transparent and support student mobility in the region and globally.
2. The use of the Promulgation of Regulations on Tertiary Education Quality Standards, launched by MoET in 2014 (MoET, 2014c) for both university self-evaluation and external-evaluation processes includes implementing sixty-three criteria commonly applied to all Vietnamese universities. As a result, the individualism and unique characteristics of each university may be neglected with some criteria not being relevant. Therefore, the MoET should improve the quality assurance criteria and priorities to benefit quality assurance implementation in universities. Most importantly, the MoET must act locally to develop national quality assurance policies to ensure policies are beneficial not only for higher education stakeholders, but also for the individual university institutions. A quality assurance policy should also mandate responsibilities and roles for implementation, while developing plans for future frameworks. A national quality assurance framework addressing representative regional and international quality assurance standards should be published to ensure local achievement of standards and guidelines. Therefore, review of the quality assurance system and policies to better meet the demands of society and encourage individualism and the unique characteristics of each university and school

is warranted.

3. The MoET should give their quality assurance agencies and universities a higher level of autonomy so that the universities have more opportunities to experience academic freedom. According to George (2011) the local development of quality assurance policies should provide more autonomy for quality assurance agencies in Vietnamese universities. For example, the independence and autonomy in both external and internal quality assurance evaluations was not evident within the U-VN's quality assurance self-reporting. However, at the SOE-AU all management, staff and students were involved in their own quality assurance policy and standards according to nationally and internationally agreed standards, such as AQF, TEQES, plus Subject Benchmarks, European standards and some other relevant state government guidelines. These characteristics of autonomy at the quality assurance agency level at both national and university levels need to be concurrently developed with independence in their own strategic management practices. The strengthening autonomy of quality assurance implementation at the university level is to enable Vietnamese universities to strive for the best possible quality in their practices to compete in national and global education markets.
4. Although accreditation processes in Vietnamese higher education have made significant progress in recent years, the Vietnamese Government should encourage third-party engagement in accreditation processes. The quality assurance experience in Australian higher education shows that there is more than one independent agency. For example, AUQA, an independent quality assurance agency, played a significant role in promoting, accrediting and reporting on quality assurance in Australian higher education institutions. In Vietnam, the DTEQA was a single authorised quality assurance agency, directly governed by MoET. However, to ensure that quality assurance monitoring and evaluation are appropriate, justified and open to the demands of relevant stakeholders within and beyond the university, the MoET should establish and authorise nationally independent and autonomous quality assurance agencies under higher education laws and relevant government quality assurance policies. Such measures would also reduce the workload and

stress for DTEQA as responsible for all Vietnamese higher education institutions.

From the findings in this study, I argue that MoET could improve the quality assurance system for Vietnamese higher education by focusing on three main areas; improving quality assurance standards, improving accreditation processes and strengthening quality assurance implementation in universities. A recommendation for a national quality assurance system framework for Vietnamese higher education is illustrated in Figure 8.1.

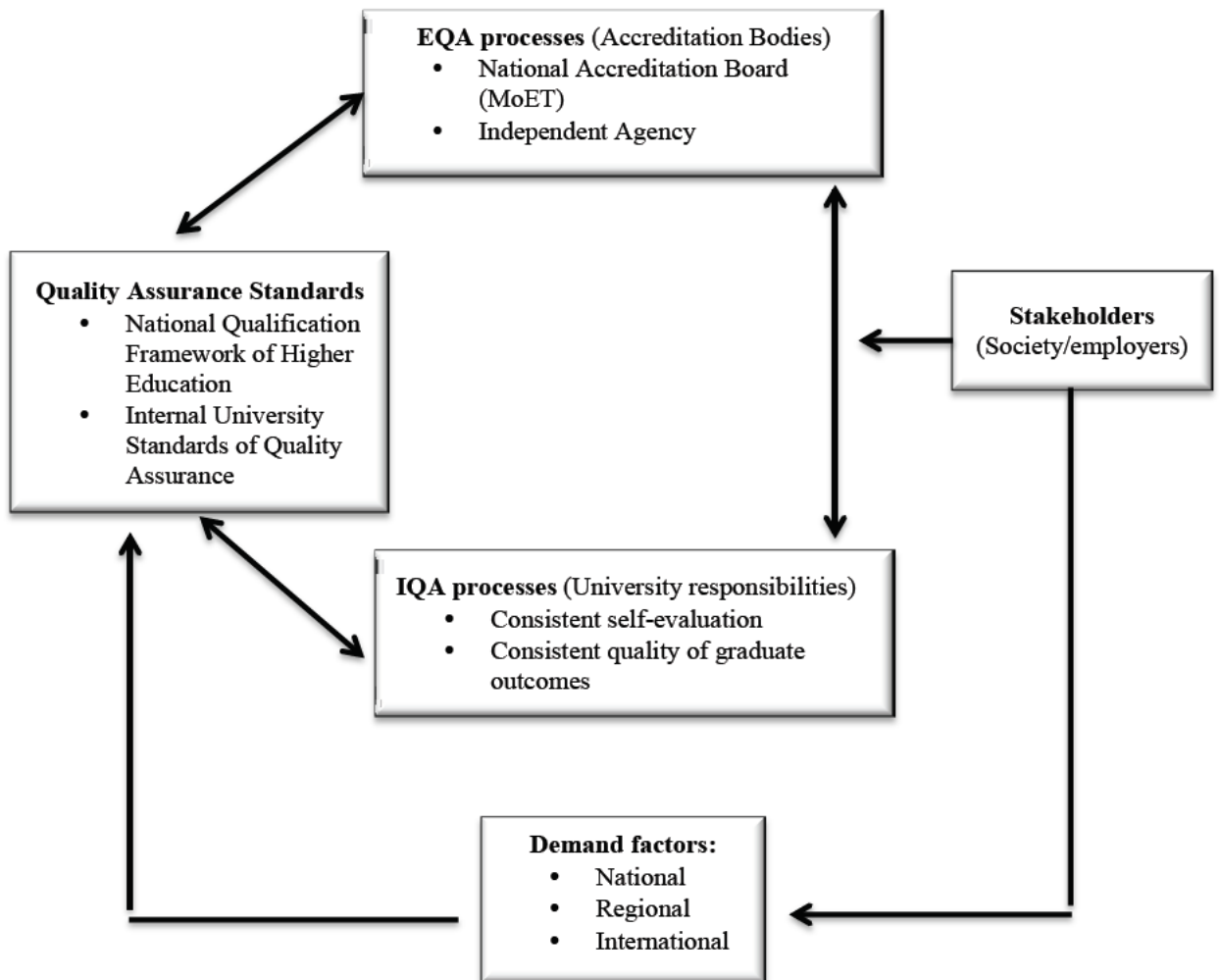


Figure 8.1: Quality assurance system framework for Vietnamese higher education

Figure 8.1 shows that to achieve higher levels of quality assurance, further steps need to be considered. First, the MoET should publish a national qualification framework

of higher education to meet the regional and international quality assurance standards, such as the ISO, the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, Inc. (ABET) and ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance (AUN-QA). In addition, in accordance with international and regional standards, a significant integration process needs to be considered in Vietnamese higher education for the internationalisation of Vietnamese higher education processes. Furthermore, improving quality assurance standards should take into consideration the requirements for quality assurance resources, the implementation processes, specific education courses in each university and the student outcomes for society in general and relevance to stakeholder needs in each university or program in particular.

Secondly, the EQA processes should incorporate the establishment of an additional independent quality assurance agency. An independent quality assurance agency combined with a national quality assurance agency could improve the higher education accreditation processes in Vietnamese universities. Also, strengthening international cooperation in the accreditation process should be a crucial factor, because accreditation in Vietnamese higher education is a relatively new issue. The need for international support was argued by most academic leaders in this study, therefore, an international accreditation workshop should be considered. Also, by actively enhancing international and regional consultancies, the Vietnamese Government could strengthen collaboration with a variety of accrediting agencies around the world and in various regions to promote the effectiveness of accreditation processes, foster knowledge and raise professional skills.

Finally, the development of a quality assurance system framework could also improve self-evaluation processes as well as the student outcomes in each university.

For academic participants at the U-VN and Vietnamese universities: As indicated from the analysis of strengths and weaknesses in quality assurance policies and procedures between the U-VN and the SOE-AU presented in Chapter 7, three recommendations can be identified to improve quality assurance at the university level:

1. The U-VN should maintain quality assurance of teaching and learning. The

development of academic programs requires intensive and regular reviews to meet national and international standards. This will continue to be important into the future. For example, the experiences from the SOE-AU demonstrated that considerable effort in each course had focused on providing better learning experiences and outcomes for all students. For instance, the SOE-AU teaching and learning strategies revealed that quality of teaching and learning was increasingly responding to regional, national and international demands. Such experiences of quality assurance in curriculum development, teaching, learning and research at the SOE-AU are also necessary for the U-VN. These approaches can also be adopted at the U-VN: Firstly, the U-VN will continue to be committed to quality assurance of teaching and learning. Quality assurance of teaching and learning should improve curricula to meet the demands of the employment market and the needs of learners. Secondly, universities should encourage more student evaluation as another recommendation for enhancing quality assurance. For example, student surveys are one of the regular quality assurance review methods in Australian universities. There are two national student surveys currently used in Australia at the national level: the Australian Graduate Survey and the Courses Experience Questionnaire (Graduate Careers Australia, 2016; Harris & James, 2006). The aims of these surveys are to engage students in activities and conditions that promote high-quality learning. At the SOE-AU, all students in all courses and units are asked to action review through student online surveys. Course and unit reviews at the SOE-AU are conducted through data collection, reflection and evaluation processes. The aim of data collection is to facilitate reflection on the strengths of a unit or course, and to assist in determining priorities for the improvement of units and courses. There is extensive literature (Harris & James, 2006; Marsh, 2007) on the use of student evaluation of teaching. Course and unit reviews suggest that student feedback is far more valid and reliable than indicated by some respondents, as reported in Chapter 6. Therefore, student evaluation should regularly be conducted in each unit or course by academic leaders or lecturers, and offer a right to respond providing informative results. Student evaluation must be promoted for improving the processes of teaching and learning.

2. According to Lim (2001), in developing countries, higher education institutions not only have to ensure quality, but also have to develop the conditions for quality assurance implementation. Therefore, quality assurance can only take effect where it is accorded appropriate resources. For example, at the time of this study, there was a dearth of physical resources at the U-VN. It was very difficult to establish and improve quality assurance under such inadequate resourcing conditions. To ensure more effective quality assurance implementation at universities particular attention should be given to both the provision of quality assurance resources. In addition, universities need to attend to academic staff working conditions and student learning conditions to promote their full participation and commitment to the institution's quality assurance initiatives.
3. The findings of this study also confirmed that both the university administration and staff in their quality assurance centres were not sufficiently qualified or experienced in quality assurance including: designing and developing quality assurance mechanisms, establishing quality assurance processes such as monitoring and assessing performance and conducting quality assurance reviews. Therefore, the university should provide training so that the university staff can perform their roles more effectively with support from internal and international experts. This is also a way to build the capacity of individual quality assurance staff and the university overall. In the next section, the final research contributions are outlined.

8.3 Research implications and contributions

There are a few research implications and contributions that this study can offer: Firstly, there are methodological implications A mixed method qualitative and quantitative approach was applied to explore and analyse the process, context, and approaches to quality assurance in the university sector. This approach appeared effective for analysing key documents, plus conducting interviews and questionnaires with participants in the field in the two universities. Interviews were employed to explore in-depth the social contexts that influenced quality assurance for academic leaders in each university, and unpack key perceptions of quality

assurance and for improving quality assurance in each university. Questionnaires were employed to analyse statistics that determined staff participant responses to quality assurance and evaluated the variables influencing quality assurance in each university. The interview and questionnaire analyses were linked to the key documents such as quality assurance policies, university mission and vision statements to create in-depth discussion. A valuable lesson that I have learnt from using mixed methods in comparative education research is that it requires rich experiences of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. In addition, conducting mixed method research, requires careful planning to describe all aspects of the research, including the study sample for qualitative and quantitative portions such as identical, embedded, or parallel participants in each case study; timing or sequencing of the qualitative and quantitative portions; and, the plan for integrating data in analysis. In addition, to the conduct of the study, it is truly an interactive learning by doing process. It required me to move back and forth during the process, identify the recurring themes, manipulating the tools at hand, making changes as needed and, above all, developing a consistent thread throughout the study across the qualitative and quantitative methods.

Secondly, this study contributes to knowledge in the field of quality assurance in universities by providing academic leader and staff perceptions on both policies and practices. This study also specifically provides current appropriate ways forward for quality assurance policy development and implementation in universities. It was also intended to contribute to tertiary educators being professionally effective in quality assurance at both national and institutional levels.

Moreover, the study revealed the importance of quality assurance system status, challenges, and approaches for enhancing quality assurance that were reportedly valued by both academic leaders and staff participating in the study. The participants strongly valued their integrity as an essential foundation for enhancing quality assurance in their academic pursuits. Their awareness of the all-encompassing nature of quality systems, structures and processes were considered a manifest result of their quest for continuous improvement.

This study investigated quality assurance experiences in universities in Vietnam and

Australia. The research project was designed and conducted with the intention of examining quality assurance comparisons between the two universities in a way that would be potentially beneficial to the two participating universities, especially for the U-VN, which seeks to improve its quality assurance position. In addition, the research provides clear implications for the policy makers in Vietnam (the MoET) in consolidating and building their support for quality assurance development in universities through a proposed framework. In addition, the comparative study makes a contribution to quality assurance efforts in universities in Vietnam and Australia, and for international organisations, local organisations and researchers seeking future research possibilities, cooperation and assistance for progressing quality assurance in universities.

This study reflects the quality assurance literature in higher education, especially for developing countries. As mentioned in the literature review of quality assurance research (Chapter 2), this literature was located in developed countries in which there were only with a few research articles or unpublished articles about Vietnamese universities. Therefore, the research findings will provide a useful reference for educators, researchers, and policy makers in this field in the future. It is also hoped that the methods used in this cross-national comparative multiple-case study research project will serve as a guide for other future cross-national comparative research projects on higher education in general and in universities in particular.

In relation to this doctoral thesis investigation it is believed this study is the first research conducted in a Vietnamese university that provides a comparison with an Australian university where the quality assurance is vigorously investigated at local, national and international higher education levels. In addition, based on the rich experiences of the development of quality assurance policies and practices in Australia, this has provided some important lessons for more effective quality assurance systems in Vietnamese universities at both national and institutional levels, where quality assurance improvements are actively being sought in the higher education sphere.

8.4 Limitations and recommendations for further research

8.4.1 Limitations

There are some limitations to this study. Firstly, case study data were collected and analysed, but limited to the investigation of quality assurance in only two universities. The case study were also restricted to quality assurance at undergraduate level in education on campus at the U-VN and the SOE-AU. As such, the findings cannot be generalised to other universities in either country. This study was also limited to investigating and describing quality assurance at the two universities in 2015. It presents a snapshot in the timeline of both universities and their institutional and national policy contexts.

Secondly, the quality assurance data collected were limited to particular significant relevant participants. Neither students' views on quality assurance nor the view of governments and employers of graduates were explored in either case study. Valuable insights could have been obtained had data been collected from students, government officials and employers who are intermediate beneficiaries of the educational provisions by the universities.

Thirdly, to gain deeper understandings into quality assurance in universities, the study could have been extended to investigate relevant contextual matters that quality assurance in a university heavily relies on, such as national politics and economic development. However, the research was limited to certain matters of ethnicity, politics, culture and contextual differences between the Vietnamese and Australian universities that were considered relevant and practicable.

Finally, as the researcher is not a native speaker of English, misunderstanding and misinterpretation may have occurred, particularly when undertaking the research in Australia. In spite of these limitations, however, due diligence and appropriate assistance from a native academic English was sought during the investigation to minimise such limitations.

8.4.2 Direction for further research

This study investigated the perceptions of academic leaders and staff on quality assurance that can be useful for both higher education policy makers and policy implementation in universities. However, on the basis of the study results here and the limitations indicated above, there are some suggestions for future research outlined below.

Quality assurance in each university relies heavily on the significant factors of national politics, national quality assurance policies and current economic developments. Therefore, further studies are needed to investigate how those factors affect quality assurance development in universities. Such studies could involve a survey of policy makers, employers and donor's views on quality assurance, allowing for a deeper contextualising. In particular, quality assurance in universities needs to incorporate student experiences. Therefore, further research should investigate student perceptions of quality assurance that is a particular priority because they are regarded as the main and immediate beneficiaries of university education provision. For instance, students' perceptions are deemed crucial in determining the extent to which quality assurance performance is measured and the demands for effective teaching and learning. Last but not least, it would be useful to investigate in more detail the cause of the difference between quality assurance policies and practices.

8.5 Conclusions

Quality assurance is a relatively recent notion at both a national level and for universities. The quality assurance systems at the U-VN and the SOE-AU reflect differing characteristics and status of quality assurance development observed at the two universities. The findings indicated that there are both similarities and differences between the quality assurance systems in the two university case studies. Although, the results of this research indicated that participants in this study had different perceptions of quality assurance in their universities, the purpose of applying quality assurance in the two universities was largely for the promotion of

high-quality teaching, learning and student research activities. However, the quality assurance systems in the two universities presented differences that focused on quality assurance structures at the national level, such as the key quality assurance agencies responsible for quality assurance in their universities, and the effectiveness of quality assurance policy implementations. At the university level, the differences were the perceptions of quality assurance measurements for teaching, learning and research, quality assurance promoting factors and strategic approaches for enhancing quality assurance development.

The findings of the study provided a useful insight into the current status of quality assurance and the promotion of factors and approaches to enhance quality assurance in the two universities. The findings of this study revealed that the U-VN's quality assurance system was facing many challenges in comparison with the quality assurance at the SOE-AU. Participants at the U-VN considered that their quality assurance system was not yet mature enough to be well regarded internationally. There is scope to promote quality assurance in Vietnam at both national and university levels. This could usefully involve improving quality assurance standards, improving accreditation processes and strengthening quality assurance implementation in universities, as depicted in Figure 8.1. This study also suggests that some future research be conducted to deepen understandings of quality assurance in universities, with greater efforts to improve the quality of higher education in universities in general and in Vietnamese universities in particular where resources are limited and the history of quality assurance is relatively brief.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Human research ethics committee approval



Ethics Office
Research Development & Integrity
Research Division
Armidale NSW 2351
Australia
Phone 02 6773 3449
Fax 02 6773 3543
jo-ann.sozou@une.edu.au
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HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM TO: Dr Brenda Wolodko, Dr Sue Elliott & Mr Ngoc Son Dong

School of Education

This is to advise you that the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved the following:

PROJECT TITLE:	Quality Assurance in The University Sector: Comparative case studies in Australia and Vietnam
APPROVAL No.:	HE15-152
COMMENCEMENT DATE:	03 June, 2015
APPROVAL VALID TO:	03 June, 2016
COMMENTS:	Nil. Conditions met in full

The Human Research Ethics Committee may grant approval for up to a maximum of three years. For approval periods greater than 12 months, researchers are required to submit an application for renewal at each twelve-month period. All researchers are required to submit a Final Report at the completion of their project. The Progress/Final Report Form is available at the following web address:
<http://www.une.edu.au/research/research-services/rdi/ethics/hre/hrec-forms>

The NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans requires that researchers must report immediately to the Human Research Ethics Committee anything that might affect ethical acceptance of the protocol. This includes adverse reactions of participants, proposed changes in the protocol, and any other unforeseen events that might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

In issuing this approval number, it is required that all data and consent forms are stored in a secure location for a minimum period of five years. These documents may be required for compliance audit processes during that time. If the location at which data and documentation are retained is changed within that five year period, the Research Ethics Officer should be advised of the new location.



Jo-Ann Sozou
Secretary/Research Ethics Officer

Appendix 2: Recommendation letter from Vietnamese Government to the U-VN

BAN TỔ CHỨC TRUNG ƯƠNG
BAN CHỈ ĐẠO ĐỀ ÁN 165
VĂN PHÒNG 165
*

Số 2153- CV/VP165
V/v giới thiệu ông Đồng Ngọc Sơn đến
thu tập số liệu tại Trường

ĐẢNG CÔNG SẢN VIỆT NAM

Hà Nội, ngày 01 tháng 4 năm 2015

Kính gửi: Trường Đại học Giáo dục, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội

Theo Quyết định số 151-QĐ/BTCTW ngày 17/3/2011 của Ban Tổ chức Trung ương, đồng chí Đồng Ngọc Sơn – giảng viên trường Cao đẳng Sư phạm Lào Cai, tỉnh Lào Cai được cử đi học tiến sĩ chuyên ngành “*Quản lý giáo dục*” tại trường Đại học New England.

Trong khuôn khổ đào tạo tiến sĩ, ông Đồng Ngọc Sơn sẽ phải về nước để thu thập số liệu, trên cơ sở đó thực hiện tiếp đề tài nghiên cứu của mình. Cụ thể: ông Đồng Ngọc Sơn sẽ tiến hành nghiên cứu so sánh công tác đảm bảo chất lượng giáo dục đại học giữa trường Đại học New England, Úc với trường Đại học Giáo dục, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội theo phương pháp trao đổi, phỏng vấn trực tiếp và sử dụng bảng hỏi để khảo sát. Để tạo điều kiện thuận lợi cho ông Đồng Ngọc Sơn hoàn thành luận án, Văn phòng 165 giới thiệu ông Đồng Ngọc Sơn đến Quý Trường để liên hệ và hỗ trợ trong việc cung cấp các thông tin cần thiết để phục vụ cho đề tài nghiên cứu của ông Sơn.

Văn phòng 165 trân trọng thông báo để Quý Trường biết và giúp đỡ ông Sơn hoàn thành tốt nhiệm vụ học tập của mình.

Nơi nhận:

- Như trên;
- Học viên Đồng Ngọc Sơn;
- Lưu VP165, Phòng HTĐTBD.

CHÁNH VĂN PHÒNG



Nguyễn Văn Du

Appendix 3: Request for permission to conduct research (English and Vietnamese)



School of Education
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REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Dear

My name is Ngoc Son Dong and I am a Doctoral student in the School of Education, University of New England (SOE-AU), Armidale NSW. As a part of this degree, I am undertaking research work for my thesis. I am under the supervision of Dr. Brenda Wolodko and Dr. Sue Elliott. I wish to invite University of Education, Vietnam National University, Hanoi to participate in my research project. The study is described below:

1. **Research title:** Quality assurance in the university sector: Comparative case study in Australia and Vietnam.
2. **Aim of research:** The purpose of this study is to explore and analyze the process, context, and approaches to quality assurance (QA) through understanding the policies and practices in the SOE-AU and University of Education, Vietnam National University, Hanoi (U-VN). With the expectation of contributing to knowledge about QA in the case study universities, the strategies and models of QA in the two universities will be established, analysed and compared across the case studies. Significant suggestions for enhancing QA in universities will be offered in this study.
3. **Significance of the study:** Numerous studies worldwide have investigated the policies and practices of QA in higher education, but most of them have investigated the approaches used in developed countries. Very little research has documented QA in developing countries. Therefore, this comparative study will investigate the current QA policies and practice in Australia and Vietnam as broadly representative of both developed countries and developing countries. The findings of this study will potentially provide valuable knowledge for QA literature, and the educational administration at the national and institutional level not only in Australia, but also in Vietnam where improvement in QA is

sought. It is also expected that this study will facilitate the provision of effective QA, thereby improving the quality of teaching and learning in undergraduate education in Vietnam drawing on Australian experiences. Finally, the findings of the study may assist other countries to better understand QA in Vietnamese higher education in general and University of Education in particular, and it may also provide useful information for other South–East Asian countries, who are trying to review and improve QA in the university sector.

I respectfully request that the Board of Education Rector allow me to conduct this research. If you consent, the study will be conducted as follows:

I would like to conduct individual interviews and a questionnaire survey. The interviews would be conducted with five academic leaders (Rector, Vice Rector, Head of the Education Department, Head of Sciences Education Department and Director of Quality assurance Department). A questionnaire is also conducted with academic staff.

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide the University of Education with a bound copy of the full research report. If you require further information about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me as the researcher or my supervisors by phone or via email as below:

Supervisor
Dr. Brenda Wolodko
School of Education
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2351 Australia
Điện thoại: +61 2 6773 2021
Fax: +61 2 6773 2445
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Co - Supervisor
Dr. Sue Elliott
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University of New England
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Fax: +61 2 6773 5078
Email: sue.elliott@AU.edu.au

Researcher
Son Dong, PhD student
School of Education
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2351 Australia
Điện thoại: +61 2 6773 2906
Email: ndong@AU.edu.au

Thank you for your consideration in this matter and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Ngoc Son Dong



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University of New England
Armidale NSW 2351
Australia
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Fax 02 6773 2445
Email: education@AU.edu.au
Website: www.AU.edu.au/education

THƯ ĐỀ NGHỊ THỰC HIỆN NGHIÊN CỨU

Kính gửi:

Tên tôi là Đồng Ngọc Sơn, hiện là nghiên cứu sinh tại Khoa Giáo dục - Đại học New England (SOE-AU), Armidale NSW, Australia. Như một phần của chương trình tiến sĩ, tôi đang thực hiện công việc nghiên cứu cho luận án tiến sĩ. Đề tài nghiên cứu dưới sự hướng dẫn của Tiến sĩ Brenda Wolodko và Tiến sĩ Sue Elliott. Nội dung luận án được mô tả như sau:

Tên đề tài: Đảm Bảo Chất Lượng Giáo Dục Đại Học: Nghiên Cứu So Sánh Giữa Australia và Việt Nam.

Mục đích nghiên cứu: Khám phá và phân tích về quá trình, yếu tố hoàn cảnh tác động và phương thức thực hiện đảm bảo chất lượng tại SOE-AU, Australia và Trường Đại học Giáo dục - Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, Việt Nam (U-VN). Với kỳ vọng đóng góp những hiểu biết về đảm bảo chất lượng tại các trường đại học cụ thể, các chiến lược thực hiện và mô hình hệ thống đảm bảo chất lượng của trường đại học U-VN và SOE-AU sẽ được phân tích và so sánh. Những biện pháp nhằm nâng cao hiệu quả công tác đảm bảo chất lượng cho trường đại học cũng sẽ được kiến nghị trong đề tài.

Ý nghĩa của đề tài: Đã có nhiều nghiên cứu trên thế giới nghiên cứu về các chính sách và thực tiễn hoạt động đảm bảo chất lượng giáo dục đại học, nhưng hầu hết các nghiên cứu này được thực hiện ở các nước phát triển. Rất ít nghiên cứu về đảm bảo chất lượng đại học thực hiện tại các nước đang phát triển. Vì vậy, nghiên cứu về đảm bảo chất lượng giáo dục đại học tại Australia và Việt Nam sẽ rất có giá trị bởi nó được thực hiện nghiên cứu ở cả nước phát triển và nước đang phát triển. Những phát hiện của nghiên cứu này sẽ cung cấp kiến thức quý báu về bảo chất lượng đại học, hữu ích cho việc quản lý giáo dục ở cấp quốc gia và trường đại học không chỉ ở Australia mà còn ở Việt Nam. Nghiên cứu cũng kỳ vọng đề ra các biện pháp trong việc nâng cao hiệu quả công tác đảm bảo chất lượng tại các trường đại học ở Việt Nam nói chung và Đại học Giáo Dục nói riêng dựa trên những kinh nghiệm của trường Đại học ở Australia. Cuối cùng, kết quả của nghiên cứu này có thể giúp các quốc gia khác để hiểu rõ hơn về đảm bảo chất lượng giáo dục đại học ở Việt Nam, và luận án cũng có thể cung cấp thông tin hữu ích cho một số trường đại học ở các nước trong khu vực Đông Nam Á, nơi đang muốn học tập và nâng cao hiệu quả công tác đảm bảo chất lượng giáo dục đại học.

Tôi kính mong Ban giám hiệu trường Đại học Giáo dục cho phép tôi tiến hành nghiên cứu này và nếu được sự đồng ý của Ban giám hiệu các nghiên cứu được tiến hành cụ thể như sau:

Tôi mong muốn được tiến hành các cuộc phỏng vấn cá nhân và điều tra khảo sát bằng bảng câu hỏi tại trường. Các cuộc phỏng vấn sẽ được tiến hành với năm nhà lãnh đạo (Hiệu trưởng, Phó Hiệu trưởng, Trưởng khoa Giáo dục, Trưởng khoa Khoa học Giáo dục và Trưởng phòng Kiểm định và Khảo thí). Bên cạnh đó, một bảng câu hỏi khảo sát sẽ được thực hiện với đội ngũ giảng viên trong trường.

Sau khi hoàn thành nghiên cứu, tôi cam kết sẽ cung cấp cho nhà trường một bản sao báo cáo nghiên cứu đầy đủ. Nếu cần thêm thông tin về đề tài nghiên cứu, xin vui lòng liên hệ với nghiên cứu sinh hoặc giáo viên hướng dẫn theo địa chỉ:

Supervisor
Dr. Brenda Wolodko
School of Education
University of New England
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Điện thoại: +61 2 6773 2021
Fax: +61 2 6773 2445
Email: bwolodko@AU.edu.au

Co - Supervisor
Dr. Sue Elliott
School of Education
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2351 Australia
Điện thoại: +61 2 6773 5087
Fax: +61 2 6773 5078
Email: sue.elliott@AU.edu.au

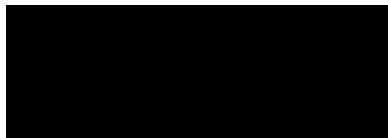
Researcher
Son Dong, PhD student
School of Education
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2351 Australia
Điện thoại: +61 2 6773 2906
Email: ndong@AU.edu.au

Trân thành cảm ơn sự giúp đỡ của Trường./.

Kính thư

Đồng Ngọc Sơn

Certified by:



Appendix 4: Request for permission to conduct research



School of Education
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2351
Australia
Phone 02 6773 3716
Fax 02 6773 2445
Email: education@AU.edu.au
Website: www.AU.edu.au/education

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Dear

My name is Ngoc Son Dong and I am a Doctoral student in the School of Education - University of New England (SOE-AU), Armidale NSW. As a part of this degree, I am undertaking research work for my thesis. The research is on quality assurance in the university sector and involves a comparative analysis of quality assurance policies and practices in the SOE-AU and Hanoi University of Education, Vietnam U-VN. I am under the supervision of Dr. Brenda Wolodko and Dr. Sue Elliott.

I would formally like to invite your School of Education to participate in this research and seek your consent for the research to be conducted in your school.

In this study, I would like to conduct individual interviews and a questionnaire survey. The interviews would be conducted with five academic leaders (Head of School, Deputy Head, Chair of Teaching and Research, Chair Research and Academic Manager). The interview would last approximately 60 minutes. The interviewees will be interviewed at a place, date and time of their convenience. I will take notes during the interview and it also will be audio recorded. The online questionnaire survey will be conducted with academic staff and take approximately half an hour to complete. Participants will be informed about the nature and requirements of the research. Participants are voluntary and names of all participants in this research will remain confidential to the researcher (and his supervisors). All data collected will be stored with care to protect the confidentiality of the participants and will be destroyed five years after completion of the study.

I am hereby seeking your consent to conduct the interviews and questionnaires from April to July 2015. Once I receive your consent I will be able to apply for Ethics Approval.

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide the School of Education with a bound copy of the full research report. If you require further information about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisors by phone or via email as follows:

Supervisor
Dr. Brenda Wolodko
School of Education
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2351 Australia
Điện thoại: +61 2 6773 2021
Fax: +61 2 6773 2445
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Co - Supervisor
Dr. Sue Elliott
School of Education
University of New England
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Fax: +61 2 6773 5078
Email: sue.elliott@AU.edu.au

Researcher
Son Dong, PhD student
School of Education
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2351 Australia
Điện thoại: +61 2 6773 2906
Email: ndong@AU.edu.au

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

I look forward to hearing form you.

Yours sincerely,

Ngoc Son Dong

Appendix 5: Approval letter for permission to conduct research at the SOE-AU



School of Education
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2351
Australia
Phone: 61 2 6773 3716
Fax: 61 2 6773 2445
Email: education@une.edu.au
www.une.edu.au/education

20 March, 2015-03-20

Dear Son,

Your research on quality assurance in the university sector sounds both interesting and valuable.

You may conduct research in the School of Education, including interviews with five academic leaders and inviting all academic faculty in the School of Education to complete an online survey related to quality assurance.

Regards,

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature and name of the sender.

Appendix 6: Invitation letter for academic leaders (English and Vietnamese)



School of Education
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2351
Australia
Phone 02 6773 3716
Fax 02 6773 2445
Email: education@AU.edu.au
Website: www.AU.edu.au/education

INVITATION LETTER FOR ACADEMIC LEADERS

Dear

My name is Ngoc Son Dong and I am a Doctoral student in the School of Education, University of New England, Australia (SOE-AU), Armidale NSW. As a part of this degree, I am undertaking research work for my thesis. I am under the supervision of Dr. Brenda Wolodko and Dr. Sue Elliott. I wish to invite the School of Education, Vietnam National University, Hanoi (U-VN) to participate in my research project. The study is described below:

1. Research title: Quality assurance in the university sector: Comparative case study in Australia and Vietnam.

2. Aim of research: The purpose of this study is to explore and analyse the process, context, and approaches to quality assurance (QA) through understanding the policies and practices in the SOE-AU, and U-VN. With the expectation of contributing to knowledge about QA in the case study universities, the strategies and models of QA in the two universities will be established, analysed and compared across the case studies. Significant suggestions for enhancing QA in universities will be offered in this study.

3. Significance of the study: Numerous studies worldwide have investigated the policies and practices of QA in higher education, but most of them have investigated the approaches used in developed countries. Very little research has documented QA in developing countries. Therefore, this comparative study will investigate the current QA policies and practice in Australia and Vietnam as broadly representative of both developed countries and developing countries. The findings of this study will potentially provide valuable knowledge for QA literature, and the educational administration at the national and institutional level not only in Australia, but also in Vietnam where improvement in QA is sought. It is also expected that this study will facilitate the provision of effective QA, thereby improving the quality of teaching and learning in undergraduate education in Vietnam drawing on Australian experiences. Finally, the findings of the study may assist other

countries to better understand QA in Vietnamese higher education in general and University of Education in particular, and it may also provide useful information for other South–East Asian countries, who are trying to review and improve QA in the university sector.

With the permission of the Rector of University of Education, I will be conducting interviews with you at your university. I have provided you with a copy of information sheet and consent form for participants as well as a copy of the research permission letter, which I received from the Rector of University of Education – Hanoi National University (please see inserts). If you are interested in participating please read the attached Information sheet that provides details of the study and how participant will be involved. Please sign the individual consent form attached and return it to me if you wish to participate.

If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me as the researcher or my supervisors by phone or via email as below:

Supervisor
Dr. Brenda Wolodko
School of Education
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2351 Australia
Điện thoại: +61 2 6773 2021
Fax: +61 2 6773 2445
Email: bwolodko@AU.edu.au

Co - Supervisor
Dr. Sue Elliott
School of Education
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2351 Australia
Điện thoại: +61 2 6773 5087
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Email: sue.elliott@AU.edu.au

Researcher
Son Dong, PhD student
School of Education
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2351 Australia
Điện thoại: +61 2 6773 2906
Email: ndong@AU.edu.au

Thank you for your time and co- operation.

Your sincerely

Ngoc Son Dong



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Armidale NSW 2351
Australia
Phone 02 6773 3716
Fax 02 6773 2445
Email: education@AU.edu.au
Website: www.AU.edu.au/education

THƯ MỜI THAM GIA NGHIÊN CỨU DÀNH CHO CÁN BỘ QUẢN LÝ

Kính gửi

Tên tôi là Đồng Ngọc Sơn, hiện là nghiên cứu sinh tại Khoa Giáo dục - Đại học New England (SOE-AU), Armidale NSW, Australia. Như một phần của chương trình tiến sĩ, tôi đang thực hiện công việc nghiên cứu cho luận án tiến sĩ. Đề tài nghiên cứu dưới sự hướng dẫn của Tiến sĩ Brenda Wolodko và Tiến sĩ Sue Elliott. Nội dung luận án được mô tả như sau:

1. Tên đề tài: Đảm Bảo Chất Lượng Giáo Dục Đại Học: Nghiên Cứu So Sánh Giữa Australia và Việt Nam.

2. Mục đích nghiên cứu: Khám phá và phân tích về quá trình, yếu tố hoàn cảnh tác động và phương thức thực hiện đảm bảo chất lượng tại SOE-AU, Australia và Trường Đại học Giáo dục - Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, Việt Nam (U-VN). Với kỳ vọng đóng góp những hiểu biết về đảm bảo chất lượng tại các trường đại học cụ thể, các chiến lược thực hiện và mô hình hệ thống đảm bảo chất lượng của trường đại học SOE-AU và U-VN sẽ được phân tích và so sánh. Những biện pháp nhằm nâng cao hiệu quả công tác đảm bảo chất lượng cho trường đại học cũng sẽ được kiến nghị trong đề tài.

3. Ý nghĩa của đề tài: Đã có nhiều nghiên cứu trên thế giới nghiên cứu về các chính sách và thực tiễn hoạt động đảm bảo chất lượng giáo dục đại học, nhưng hầu hết các nghiên cứu này được thực hiện ở các nước phát triển. Rất ít nghiên cứu về đảm bảo chất lượng đại học thực hiện tại các nước đang phát triển. Vì vậy, nghiên cứu về đảm bảo chất lượng giáo dục đại học tại Australia và Việt Nam sẽ rất có giá trị bởi nó được thực hiện nghiên cứu ở cả nước phát triển và nước đang phát triển. Những phát hiện của nghiên cứu này sẽ cung cấp kiến thức quý báu về bảo chất lượng đại học, hữu ích cho việc quản lý giáo dục ở cấp quốc gia và trường đại học không chỉ ở Australia mà còn ở Việt Nam. Nghiên cứu cũng kỳ vọng đề ra các biện pháp trong việc nâng cao hiệu quả công tác đảm bảo chất lượng tại các trường đại học ở Việt Nam nói chung và Đại học Giáo Dục nói riêng dựa trên những kinh nghiệm của trường Đại học ở Australia. Cuối cùng, kết quả của nghiên cứu này có thể giúp các quốc gia khác để hiểu rõ hơn về đảm bảo chất lượng giáo dục đại học ở Việt Nam, và luận án cũng có thể cung cấp thông tin hữu ích cho một số trường đại học ở các nước trong khu vực Đông Nam Á, nơi đang muốn học tập và nâng cao hiệu quả công tác đảm bảo chất lượng giáo dục đại học.

Được sự đồng ý của Hiệu trưởng trường Đại học giáo dục, tôi sẽ thực hiện phỏng vấn với anh (chị) tại trường Đại học Giáo Dục. Tôi sẽ cung cấp một bản thông tin về đề tài nghiên cứu, biên bản đồng ý tham gia nghiên cứu và thư cho phép của Hiệu trưởng (file đính kèm). Nếu anh (chị) muốn tham gia xin vui lòng đọc tờ thông tin cung cấp chi tiết thông tin về đề tài và các yếu tố liên quan đến nghiên cứu và cách thức tham gia tham gia vào nghiên cứu này. Anh (chị) hãy ký vào biên bản đồng ý tham gia nghiên cứu và gửi lại cho tôi nếu bạn muốn tham gia.

Nếu cần thêm thông tin về đề tài nghiên cứu, xin vui lòng liên hệ với nghiên cứu sinh hoặc giáo viên hướng dẫn theo địa chỉ:

Hướng dẫn chính
TS. Brenda Wolodko
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Fax: +61 2 6773 2445
Email: bwolodko@AU.edu.au

Hướng dẫn phụ
TS. Sue Elliott
School of Education
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2351 Australia
Điện thoại: +61 2 6773 5087
Fax: +61 2 6773 5078
Email: sue.elliott@AU.edu.au

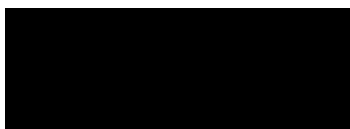
Nghiên cứu sinh
Đồng Ngọc Sơn
School of Education
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2351 Australia
Điện thoại: +61 2 6773 2906
Email: ndong@AU.edu.au

Trân trọng cảm ơn thời gian và sự hợp tác của anh (chị).

Kính thư

Đồng Ngọc Sơn

Certified by:



Appendix 7: Invitation letter for academic staff (English and Vietnamese)



School of Education
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2351
Australia
Phone 02 6773 3716
Fax 02 6773 2445
Email: education@AU.edu.au
Website: www.AU.edu.au/education

INVITATION LETTER FOR ACADEMIC STAFF

Dear

My name is Ngoc Son Dong and I am a Doctoral student in the School of Education - University of New England (SOE-AU), Armidale NSW. As a part of this degree, I am undertaking research work for my thesis. I am under the supervision of Dr. Brenda Wolodko and Dr. Sue Elliott. I wish to invite the University of Education – Vietnam National University, Hanoi (SOE-AU) as participate in my research project. The study is described below:

1. Research title: Quality assurance in the university sector: Comparative case study in Australia and Vietnam.

2. Aim of research: The purpose of this study is to explore and analyse the process, context, and approaches to quality assurance (QA) through understanding the policies and practices in SOE-AU, Australia and U-VN. With the expectation of contributing to knowledge about QA in the case study universities, the strategies and models of QA in the two universities will be established, analysed and compared across the case studies. Significant suggestions for enhancing QA in universities will be offered in this study.

3. Significance of the study: Numerous studies worldwide have investigated the policies and practices of QA in higher education, but most of them have investigated the approaches used in developed countries. Very little research has documented QA in developing countries. Therefore, this comparative study will investigate the current QA policies and practice in Australia and Vietnam as broadly representative of both developed countries and developing countries. The findings of this study will potentially provide valuable knowledge for QA literature, and the educational administration at the national and institutional level not only in Australia, but also in Vietnam where improvement in QA is sought. It is also expected that this study will facilitate the provision of effective QA, thereby improving the quality of teaching and learning in undergraduate education in Vietnam drawing on Australian experiences. Finally, the findings of the study may assist other countries to better

understand QA in Vietnamese higher education in general and University of Education in particular, and it may also provide useful information for other South–East Asian countries, who are trying to review and improve QA in the university sector.

With the permission of the Rector of University of Education, I will be conducting a questionnaire with you at your university. I have provided you with a copy of information sheet and consent form for participants as well as a copy of the research permission letter which I received from the Rector of University of Education – Hanoi National University (please see inserts). If you are interested in participating please read the attached Information sheet that provides details of the study and how the participant will be involved. Please sign the individual consent form attached and return it to me if you wish to participate.

If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me as the researcher or my supervisors by phone or via email as below:

Supervisor

Dr. Brenda Wolodko
School of Education
University of New England
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Researcher

Son Dong, PhD Candidate
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Email: ndong@AU.edu.au

Thank you for your time and co - operation.

Your sincerely,

Ngoc Son Dong



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THƯ MỜI THAM GIA NGHIÊN CỨU DÀNH CHO GIẢNG VIÊN

Kính gửi

Tên tôi là Đồng Ngọc Sơn, hiện là nghiên cứu sinh tại Khoa Giáo dục - Đại học New England (SOE-AU), Armidale NSW, Australia. Như một phần của chương trình tiến sĩ, tôi đang thực hiện công việc nghiên cứu cho luận án tiến sĩ. Đề tài nghiên cứu dưới sự hướng dẫn của Tiến sĩ Brenda Wolodko và Tiến sĩ Sue Elliott. Nội dung luận án được mô tả như sau:

1. Tên đề tài: Đảm Bảo Chất Lượng Giáo Dục Đại Học: Nghiên Cứu So Sánh Giữa Australia và Việt Nam.

2. Mục đích nghiên cứu: Khám phá và phân tích về quá trình, yếu tố hoàn cảnh tác động và phương thức thực hiện đảm bảo chất lượng tại SOE-AU, Australia và Trường Đại học Giáo dục - Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, Việt Nam (U-VN). Với kỳ vọng đóng góp những hiểu biết về đảm bảo chất lượng tại các trường đại học cụ thể, các chiến lược thực hiện và mô hình hệ thống đảm bảo chất lượng của trường đại học SOE-AU và U-VN sẽ được phân tích và so sánh. Những biện pháp nhằm nâng cao hiệu quả công tác đảm bảo chất lượng cho trường đại học cũng sẽ được kiến nghị trong đề tài.

3. Ý nghĩa của đề tài: Đã có nhiều nghiên cứu trên thế giới nghiên cứu về các chính sách và thực tiễn hoạt động đảm bảo chất lượng giáo dục đại học, nhưng hầu hết các nghiên cứu này được thực hiện ở các nước phát triển. Rất ít nghiên cứu về đảm bảo chất lượng đại học thực hiện tại các nước đang phát triển. Vì vậy, nghiên cứu về đảm bảo chất lượng giáo dục đại học tại Australia và Việt Nam sẽ rất có giá trị bởi nó được thực hiện nghiên cứu ở cả nước phát triển và nước đang phát triển. Những phát hiện của nghiên cứu này sẽ cung cấp kiến thức quý báu về bảo chất lượng đại học, hữu ích cho việc quản lý giáo dục ở cấp quốc gia và trường đại học không chỉ ở Australia mà còn ở Việt Nam. Nghiên cứu cũng kỳ vọng đề ra các biện pháp trong việc nâng cao hiệu quả công tác đảm bảo chất lượng tại các trường đại học ở Việt Nam nói chung và Đại học Giáo Dục nói riêng dựa trên những kinh nghiệm của trường Đại học ở Australia. Cuối cùng, kết quả của nghiên cứu này có thể giúp các quốc gia khác để hiểu rõ hơn về đảm bảo chất lượng giáo dục đại học ở Việt Nam, và luận án cũng có thể cung cấp thông tin hữu ích cho một số trường đại học ở các nước

trong khu vực Đông Nam Á, nơi đang muốn học tập và nâng cao hiệu quả công tác đảm bảo chất lượng giáo dục đại học.

Được sự đồng ý của Hiệu trưởng trường Đại học giáo dục, tôi sẽ điều tra khảo sát bằng bảng hỏi với anh (chị) tại trường Đại học Giáo Dục. Tôi sẽ cung cấp một bản thông tin về đề tài nghiên cứu, biên bản đồng ý tham gia nghiên cứu và thư cho phép của Hiệu trưởng (file đính kèm). Nếu anh (chị) muốn tham gia xin vui lòng đọc tờ thông tin cung cấp chi tiết thông tin về đề tài và các yếu tố liên quan đến nghiên cứu và cách thức tham gia vào nghiên cứu này. Anh (chị) hãy ký vào biên bản đồng ý tham gia nghiên cứu và gửi lại cho tôi nếu muốn tham gia.

Nếu cần thêm thông tin về đề tài nghiên cứu, xin vui lòng liên hệ với nghiên cứu sinh hoặc giáo viên hướng dẫn theo địa chỉ:

Hướng dẫn chính
TS. Brenda Wolodko
School of Education
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2351 Australia
Điện thoại: +61 2 6773 2021
Fax: +61 2 6773 2445
Email: bwolodko@AU.edu.au

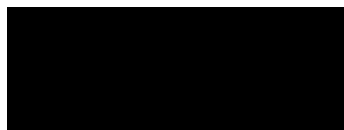
Hướng dẫn phụ
TS. Sue Elliott
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Fax: +61 2 6773 5078
Email: sue.elliott@AU.edu.au

Nghiên cứu sinh
Đông Ngọc Sơn
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Email: ndong@AU.edu.au

Trân trọng cảm ơn thời gian và sự hợp tác của anh (chị).

Kính thư
Đông Ngọc Sơn

Certified by:



Appendix 8: Information sheet for interview participants (English and Vietnamese)



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Email: education@AU.edu.au
Website: www.AU.edu.au/education

INFORMATION SHEET FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Ngoc Son Dong and I am conducting this research as part of my PhD at the School of Education, University of New England, Australia (SOE-AU). My supervisors are Dr. Brenda Wolodko and Dr. Sue Elliott. I wish to invite you to participate in my research project, described below.

Research Project	Quality assurance in the university sector: Comparative case studies in Australia and Vietnam
Aim of the research	The purpose of this study is to explore and analyse the process, context, and approaches to quality assurance (QA) through understanding the policies and practices in the SOE-AU, Australia and U-VN. With the expectation of contributing to knowledge about QA in the case study universities, the strategies and models of QA in the two universities will be established, analysed and compared across the case studies. Significant suggestions for enhancing QA in universities will be offered in this study.
Interview	I would like to conduct a face-to-face individual interview with you at U-VN. The interview will take approximately one hour. With your permission, I will make an audio recording of the interview to ensure that I accurately recall the information you provide. Following the interview, a transcript will be provided to you if you wish to see one.
Confidentiality	Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study will remain confidential. No individual will be identified by name in any publication of the results. All names will be replaced by pseudonyms; this will ensure that

	you are not identifiable.
Participation is Voluntary	Please understand that your involvement in this study is voluntary and I respect your right to withdraw from the study at any time. You may discontinue the interview at any time without consequence and you do not need to provide any explanation if you decide not to participate or withdraw at any time.
Questions	The interview questions will not be of a sensitive nature: rather they are general, aiming to enable you to enhance my knowledge of the challenges and opportunities for better quality assurance.
Use of information	I will use information from the interview as part of my doctoral thesis, which I expect to complete in July 2017. Information from the interview may also be used in journal articles and conference presentations before and after this date. At all times, I will safeguard your identity by presenting the information in way that will not allow you to be identified.
Upsetting issues	It is unlikely that this research will raise any personal or upsetting issues but if it does you may wish to contact your University Health Centre.
Storage of information	I will keep hardcopy recordings and notes of the interview in a locked cabinet at the researcher's office at the SOE-AU's of Education. Any electronic data will be kept on a password-protected computer in the same School. Only the research team will have access to the data.
Disposal of information	All the data collected in this research will be kept for a minimum of five years after successful submission of my thesis, after which it will be disposed of by deleting relevant computer files, and destroying or shredding hardcopy materials.
Approval	This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (Approval No HE15-152 Valid to 03/06/2016)
Contact details	<p>Feel free to contact me with any questions about this research by email at ndong@AU.edu.au or by phone on + 61 (02) 67732906.</p> <p>You may also contact my supervisors in overseas. My Principal supervisors name is Dr. Brenda and she can be contacted at bwolodko@AU.edu.au or +61 (02) 67733237 and my Co-supervisors name is Dr. Sue and she can be at sellio24@AU.edu.au or +61 (02) 67735078.</p>

Complaints

Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact:

Name: Dang Xuan Anh

Position: Vice Director of Training Department, Bacgiang Agriculture and Forestry University

Phone number: 0240 3 3874 387

Email: anhdx@bafu.edu.vn

Or

The Research Ethics Officer

Research Services

University of New England

Armidale, NSW 2351, Australia

Tel: + 61 (02) 6773 3449 Fax: (02) 6773 3543

Email: ethics@AU.edu.au

Thank you for considering this request and I look forward to further contact with you.

Regards,

PhD Candidate

Ngoc Son Dong



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THÔNG TIN CHO NGƯỜI ĐƯỢC PHÒNG VẤN

Tên tôi là Đồng Ngọc Sơn, hiện tôi đang thực hiện nghiên cứu này như một phần của luận án tiến sĩ tại trường Đại học New England Australia. Giáo viên hướng dẫn của tôi là Dr. Brenda Wolodko and Dr. Sue Elliott. Tôi mong muốn được mời bạn tham gia vào đề tài như mô tả dưới đây:

Tên đề tài	Đảm bảo chất lượng giáo dục đại học: Nghiên cứu so sánh giữa Australia và Việt Nam.
Mục đích nghiên cứu	Khám phá và phân tích về quá trình, yếu tố hoàn cảnh tác động và phương thức thực hiện đảm bảo chất lượng tại Khoa Giáo dục, Trường Đại học New England (SOE-AU), Australia và Trường Đại học Giáo dục - Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, Việt Nam (U-VN). Với kỳ vọng đóng góp những hiểu biết về đảm bảo chất lượng tại các trường đại học cụ thể, các chiến lược thực hiện và mô hình hệ thống đảm bảo chất lượng của trường đại học SOE-AU và U-VN sẽ được phân tích và so sánh. Những biện pháp nhằm nâng cao hiệu quả công tác đảm bảo chất lượng cho trường đại học cũng sẽ được kiến nghị trong đề tài.
Phòng vấn	Tôi muốn thực hiện một cuộc phỏng vấn trực tiếp mặt đối mặt với anh (chị) tại U-VN. Cuộc phỏng vấn diễn ra khoảng 45 phút đến 60 phút. Nếu được sự đồng ý của anh (chị) tôi sẽ tiến hành ghi âm cuộc phỏng vấn để đảm bảo thông tin bạn cung cấp không bị bỏ sót. Sau cuộc phỏng vấn một bản ghi chép nội dung phỏng vấn sẽ được gửi lại cho anh (chị) nếu được yêu cầu.
Bảo mật	Bất kỳ thông tin cá nhân nào thu thập trong quá trình nghiên cứu sẽ được giữ kín. Không có cá nhân nào được xác định bởi tên trong bất kỳ công bố kết quả nào. Tất cả các tên sẽ được thay thế bằng bút danh, điều này sẽ đảm bảo rằng không ai có thể nhận ra anh (chị).
Tham gia tự	Hãy hiểu rằng sự tham gia của bạn trong nghiên cứu này là

nguyện	tự nguyện. Tôi tôn trọng quyền của bạn nếu bạn muốn rút ra khỏi nghiên cứu bất kỳ lúc nào mà bạn muốn mà không phải đưa ra bất kỳ một lời giải thích nào.
Các câu hỏi	Các câu hỏi dùng trong phỏng vấn không có tính chất nhạy cảm, thay vào đó là những câu hỏi bình thường, nhằm mục đích cho phép nâng cao kiến thức về những thách thức và cơ hội để hiểu biết rõ hơn về lĩnh vực đảm bảo chất lượng giáo dục đại học.
Sử dụng thông tin	Tôi sẽ sử dụng thông tin từ cuộc phỏng vấn như một phần của luận án tiến sĩ của tôi, mà tôi hy vọng sẽ hoàn thành vào tháng 6 năm 2017. Thông tin từ các cuộc phỏng vấn cũng có thể được sử dụng trong các bài báo và bài thuyết trình thời gian trước và sau khi hoàn thành luận án. Trên tất cả, tôi sẽ bảo vệ danh tính của anh (chị) bằng cách trình bày các thông tin không cho phép danh tính của bạn được xác định.
Vấn đề ảnh hưởng	Nếu vấn đề nghiên cứu này làm ảnh hưởng đến sức khỏe của anh (chị) có thể liên hệ với Trung tâm y tế cộng đồng tại địa phương.
Lưu giữ thông tin	Tôi sẽ giữ bản gốc của cuộc phỏng vấn trong tủ có khoá tại trường Đại học New England, Australia. Đối với dữ liệu điện tử sẽ được giữ trên một máy tính với mật khẩu bảo vệ và chỉ duy nhất có nhóm nghiên cứu mới được truy cập vào dữ liệu.
Xoá thông tin	Tất cả các dữ liệu thu thập trong nghiên cứu sẽ được lưu giữ tối thiểu trong vòng năm năm sau khi nộp thành công luận án của tôi. Sau đó nó sẽ được xử lý bằng cách xoá các tập tin máy tính có liên quan, và phá huỷ bằng cách băm nhỏ đối với vật liệu cứng.
Xác nhận	Luận án này đã được phê duyệt chấp thuận của Uỷ Ban Đạo Đức Nghiên Cứu Con Người tại trường Đại học University of New England (Phê duyệt số HE15-152 có giá trị đến 30/6/2016).
Thông tin liên hệ	Hãy liên hệ với tôi với bất kỳ câu hỏi nào về nghiên cứu này qua email: ndong@AU.edu.au hoặc số điện thoại + 61 (02) 67732906. Hoặc ông: Đặng Xuân Anh: email anhdx@bgfu.edu.vn hay qua số điện thoại 0240 3874 387. Bạn cũng có thể liên hệ với người hướng dẫn của tôi ở nước ngoài. Giáo viên hướng dẫn chính Dr. Brenda và cũng có thể liên hệ với bà tại địa chỉ bwolodko@AU.edu.au hoặc điện thoại +61 (02) 67733237 và giáo viên hướng dẫn phụ Dr. Sue và cũng có thể liên hệ

Phản Nàn

với bà tại địa chỉ sellio24@AU.edu.au hoặc điện thoại +61 (02) 67735078.

Nếu bạn phản nàn về cách đề tài nghiên cứu được thực hiện. Xin bạn vui lòng liên hệ:

Ông: Đặng Xuân Anh

Phó Trưởng phòng Đào tạo, trường Đại học Nông Lâm Bắc Giang

Điện thoại: 0240 3 3874 387

Email: anhdx@bafu.edu.vn

Hoặc

Liên hệ chuyên viên Văn Phòng Đạo Đức Nghiên cứu tại:

Dịch vụ nghiên cứu

Đại học New England

Armidale, NSW 2351, Australia

Tel: + 61 (02) 6773 3449 Fax: (02) 6773 3543

Email: ethics@AU.edu.au

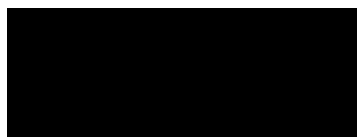
Cảm ơn bạn đã xem xét yêu cầu này và tôi mong muốn được tiếp xúc với bạn.

Trân trọng,

Nghiên cứu sinh

Đông Ngọc Sơn

Certified by:



Appendix 9: Information sheet for questionnaire survey participants (English and Vietnamese)



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Armidale NSW 2351
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Phone 02 6773 3716
Fax 02 6773 2445
Email: education@AU.edu.au
Website: www.AU.edu.au/education

INFRORMATION SHEET FOR QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Dear Sir/Madam

I wish to invite you to participate in my research project, described below.

My name is Ngoc Son Dong and I am conducting this research as part of my PhD in the School of Education at the University of New England (SOE-AU). My supervisors are Dr. Brenda Wolodko and Dr. Sue Elliott.

Research Project	Quality assurance in the university sector: Comparative case studies in Australia and Vietnam
Aim of the research	The purpose of this study is to explore and analyse the process, context, and approaches to quality assurance (QA) through understanding the policies and practices in SOE-AU and University of Education, Vietnam National University, Hanoi (U-VN). With the expectation of contributing to knowledge about QA in the case study universities, the strategies and models of QA in the two universities will be established, analysed and compared across the case studies. Significant suggestions for enhancing QA in universities will be offered in this study.
Questionnaire	I would like to conduct a questionnaire survey with you at SOE-AU. The questionnaire survey will take approximately 30 minutes. Before taking the survey, the participants are asked to sign the consent form. The data collected from the survey will be used for purposes of my study. The respondents are kindly requested to respond to all questions with honesty to help the researcher to draw an accurate picture about quality assurance in your university.
Confidentiality	Any information or personal details gathered in the course

	of the study will remain confidential. No individual will be identified by name in any publication of the results. All names will be replaced by pseudonyms; this will ensure that you are not identifiable.
Participation is Voluntary	Please understand that your involvement in this study is voluntary and I respect your right to withdraw from the study at any time. You may discontinue the interview at any time without consequence and you do not need to provide any explanation if you decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time.
Questions	The questionnaire questions will not be of a sensitive nature: rather they are general, aiming to enable you to enhance my knowledge of the challenges and opportunities for better quality assurance.
Use of information	I will use information from the questionnaire as part of my doctoral thesis, which I expect to complete in July 2017. Information from the questionnaire may also be used in journal articles and conference presentations before and after this date. At all times, I will safeguard your identity by presenting the information in way that will not allow you to be identified.
Upsetting issues	It is unlikely that this research will raise any personal or upsetting issues but if it does you may wish to contact your University Health Centre.
Storage of information	I will keep the questionnaires in a locked cabinet at the researcher's office at the University of New England's School of Education. Any electronic data will be kept on a password protected computer in the same School. Only the research team will have access to the data.
Disposal of information	All the data collected in this research will be kept for a minimum of five years after successful submission of my thesis, after which it will be disposed of by deleting relevant computer files, and destroying or shredding hardcopy materials.
Approval	This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (Approval No HE15-152 Valid to 03/06/2016).
Contact details	Feel free to contact me with any questions about this research by email at ndong@AU.edu.au or by phone on + 61 (02) 67732906. You may also contact my supervisors in overseas. My Principal supervisors name is Dr. Brenda and she can be contacted at bwolodko@AU.edu.au or +61 (02) 67733237

and my Co-supervisors name is Dr. Sue and she can be contacted at sellio24@AU.edu.au or +61 (02) 67735078.

Complaints

Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact:

Name: Dang Xuan Anh

Position: Vice Director of Training Department, Bacgiang Agriculture and Forestry University

Phone number: 0240 3 3874 387

Email: anhdx@bafu.edu.vn

Or

The Research Ethics Officer

Research Services

University of New England

Armidale, NSW 2351, Australia

Tel: +61 (02) 6773 3449 Fax: (02) 6773 3543

Email: ethics@AU.edu.au

Thank you for considering this request and I look forward to further contact with you.

Regards,

PhD Candidate

Ngoc Son Dong



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Australia
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Fax 02 6773 2445
Email: education@AU.edu.au
Website: www.AU.edu.au/education

THÔNG TIN CHO NGƯỜI ĐƯỢC ĐIỀU TRA

Tên tôi là Đồng Ngọc Sơn, hiện tôi đang thực hiện nghiên cứu này như một phần của luận án tiến sĩ tại trường Đại học New England Australia (SOE-AU). Giáo viên hướng dẫn của tôi là Dr. Brenda Wolodko and Dr. Sue Elliott. Tôi mong muốn được mời bạn tham gia vào đề tài như mô tả dưới đây:

Tên đề tài	Đảm bảo chất lượng giáo dục đại học: Nghiên cứu so sánh giữa Australia và Việt Nam.
Mục đích nghiên cứu	Khám phá và phân tích về quá trình, yếu tố hoàn cảnh tác động và phương thức thực hiện đảm bảo chất lượng tại SOE-AU và Trường Đại học Giáo dục - Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, Việt Nam (U-VN). Với kỳ vọng đóng góp những hiểu biết về đảm bảo chất lượng tại các trường đại học cụ thể, các chiến lược thực hiện và mô hình hệ thống đảm bảo chất lượng của trường đại học AU và VN sẽ được phân tích và so sánh. Những biện pháp nhằm nâng cao hiệu quả công tác đảm bảo chất lượng cho trường đại học cũng sẽ được kiến nghị trong đề tài.
Điều tra khảo sát	Tôi muốn thực hiện một cuộc khảo sát bằng một bảng câu hỏi với bạn tại Đại học Giáo dục - Đại học Quốc gia Việt Nam, Hà Nội. Trả lời các câu hỏi khảo sát sẽ mất khoảng 20 đến 30 phút để trả lời. Trước khi tham gia cuộc khảo sát, những người tham gia sẽ được yêu cầu ký giấy chấp thuận thực hiện khảo sát. Các dữ liệu thu thập từ cuộc khảo sát sẽ được sử dụng cho mục đích nghiên cứu của tôi. Những người trả lời được yêu cầu vui lòng trả lời tất cả câu hỏi với sự trung thực để giúp các nhà nghiên cứu để vẽ một bức tranh chính xác về vấn đề đảm bảo chất lượng trong trường đại học của bạn.
Bảo mật	Bất kỳ thông tin cá nhân nào thu thập trong quá trình nghiên cứu sẽ được giữ kín. Không có cá nhân nào được xác định bởi tên trong bất kỳ công bố kết quả nào. Tất cả các tên sẽ được thay thế bằng bút danh, điều này sẽ đảm bảo rằng không ai có thể nhận ra anh (chị)
Tham gia tự	Hãy hiểu rằng sự tham gia của bạn trong nghiên cứu này là

nguyện	tự nguyện. Tôi tôn trọng quyền của bạn nếu bạn muốn rút ra khỏi nghiên cứu bất kỳ lúc nào mà bạn muốn mà không phải đưa ra bất kỳ một lời giải thích nào.
Các câu hỏi	Các câu hỏi dùng trong phỏng vấn không có tính chất nhạy cảm, thay vào đó là những câu hỏi bình thường, nhằm mục đích cho phép nâng cao kiến thức về những thách thức và cơ hội để hiểu biết rõ hơn về lĩnh vực đảm bảo chất lượng giáo dục đại học.
Sử dụng thông tin	Tôi sẽ sử dụng thông tin từ cuộc phỏng vấn như một phần của luận án tiến sĩ của tôi, mà tôi hy vọng sẽ hoàn thành vào tháng 6 năm 2017. Thông tin từ các cuộc phỏng vấn cũng có thể được sử dụng trong các bài báo và bài thuyết trình thời gian trước và sau khi hoàn thành luận án. Trên tất cả, tôi sẽ bảo vệ danh tính của anh (chị) bằng cách trình bày các thông tin không cho phép danh tính của bạn được xác định.
Vấn đề ảnh hưởng	Nếu vấn đề nghiên cứu này làm ảnh hưởng đến sức khỏe của anh (chị) có thể liên hệ với Trung tâm y tế cộng đồng tại địa phương.
Lưu giữ thông tin	Tôi sẽ giữ bản gốc phiếu điều tra trong tủ có khoá tại trường Đại học New England, Australia. Đối với dữ liệu điện tử sẽ được giữ trên một máy tính với mật khẩu bảo vệ và chỉ duy nhất có nhóm nghiên cứu mới được truy cập vào dữ liệu.
Xoá thông tin	Tất cả các dữ liệu thu thập trong nghiên cứu sẽ được lưu giữ tối thiểu trong vòng năm năm sau khi nộp thành công luận án của tôi. Sau đó nó sẽ được xử lý bằng cách xoá các tập tin máy tính có liên quan, và phá huỷ bằng cách băm nhỏ đối với vật liệu cứng.
Xác nhận	Luận án này đã được phê duyệt chấp thuận của Uỷ Ban Đạo Đức Nghiên Cứu Con Người tại trường Đại học University of New England (Phê duyệt số, có giá trị đến .././....).
Thông tin liên hệ	Hãy liên hệ với tôi với bất kỳ câu hỏi nào về nghiên cứu này qua email: ndong@AU.edu.au hoặc số điện thoại + 61 (02) 67732906. Bạn cũng có thể liên hệ với người hướng dẫn của tôi ở nước ngoài. Giáo viên hướng dẫn chính Dr. Brenda và cũng có thể liên hệ với bà tại địa chỉ bwolodko@AU.edu.au hoặc điện thoại +61 (02) 67733237 và giáo viên hướng dẫn phụ Dr. Sue và cũng có thể liên hệ với bà tại địa chỉ sellio24@AU.edu.au hoặc điện thoại +61 (02) 67735078.

Phản Nản

Nếu bạn phản nản về cách đề tài nghiên cứu được thực hiện. Xin bạn vui lòng liên hệ:

Ông: Đặng Xuân Anh

Phó Trưởng phòng Đào tạo, trường Đại học Nông Lâm Bắc Giang

Điện thoại: 0240 3 3874 387

Email: anhdx@bafu.edu.vn

Hoặc

Liên hệ chuyên viên Văn Phòng Đạo Đức Nghiên cứu tại:

Dịch vụ nghiên cứu

Đại học New England

Armidale, NSW 2351, Australia

Tel: + 61 (02) 6773 3449 Fax: (02) 6773 3543

Email: ethics@AU.edu.au

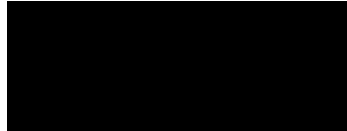
Cảm ơn anh (chị) đã xem xét yêu cầu này và tôi mong muốn được tiếp xúc với bạn.

Trân trọng,

Nghiên cứu sinh

Đông Ngọc Sơn

Certified by:



Appendix 10: Consent form for interview participants (English and Vietnamese)



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Australia
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Fax 02 6773 2445
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Website: www.AU.edu.au/education

CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Research Project: Quality Assurance in The University Sector: Comparative case studies in Australia and Vietnam

Persons responsible for this study

Supervisor
Dr. Brenda Wolodko
School of Education
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Armidale NSW 2351 Australia
Phone + 61 2 6773 2021
Facsimile +61 2 6773 2445
Email bwolodko@AU.edu.au

Co - Supervisor
Dr. Sue Elliott
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Researcher
Son Dong, PhD Candidate
School of Education
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2351 Australia
Phone + 61 2 6773 2906
Email: ndong@AU.edu.au

I,, have read the information contained in the Information Sheet for Participants and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

Yes/No

I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I may withdraw at any time.

Yes/No

I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published using a pseudonym

Yes/No

I agree that I may be quoted using a pseudonym

Yes/No

I agree to the interview being audio recorded and transcribed.

Yes/No

I would like to receive a copy of the transcription of the interview.

Yes/No

.....
Participant Date
.....
Researcher Dat



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ĐƠN ĐỒNG Ý THAM GIA PHÒNG VẤN

Tên đề tài: Đảm Bảo Chất Lượng Giáo Dục Đại Học: Nghiên Cứu So Sánh Giữa Australia và Việt Nam.

Người có trách nhiệm trong nghiên cứu này:

Hướng dẫn chính
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Đồng Ngọc Sơn
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 Armidale NSW 2351 Australia
 Điện thoại: +61 2 6773 2906
 Email: ndong@AU.edu.au

Tôi,, đã đọc thông tin nghiên cứu của đề tài, tất cả các câu trả lời liên qua đến đề tài nghiên cứu đã được trả lời và đáp ứng được yêu cầu của tôi.

Đồng ý /Không đồng ý

Tôi đồng ý tham gia phỏng vấn và tôi có thể rút lui khỏi cuộc phỏng vấn bất cứ lúc nào.

Đồng ý /Không đồng ý

Tôi đồng ý rằng dữ liệu trong nghiên cứu được có thể được công bố bằng một bút danh

Đồng ý /Không đồng ý

Tôi đồng ý trích dẫn được dùng bằng một bút danh

Đồng ý /Không đồng ý

Tôi đồng ý nội dung phỏng vấn được nghi âm hoặc nghi chép

Đồng ý /Không đồng ý

Tôi muốn nhận được bản ghi âm hoặc bản ghi chép.

Đồng ý /Không đồng ý

.....
 Chữ ký người tham gia phỏng vấn Ngày tham gia

.....
 Chữ ký người phỏng vấn Ngày tham gia

Certified by: 

Appendix 11: Consent form for questionnaire participants (English and Vietnamese)



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Website: www.AU.edu.au/education

CONSENT FORM FOR QUESTIONNAIRE PARTICIPANTS

Research Project: Quality Assurance in The University Sector: Comparative case studies in Australia and Vietnam

Persons responsible for this study

Supervisor
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Researcher
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Phone + 61 2 6773 2906
Email: ndong@AU.edu.au

I,, have read the information contained in the Information Sheet for Participants and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

Yes/No

I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I may withdraw at any time.

Yes/No

I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published using a pseudonym

Yes/No

I agree that I may be quoted using a pseudonym

Yes/No

.....
Participant Date

.....
Researcher Date



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ĐƠN ĐỒNG Ý THAM GIA KHẢO SÁT

Tên đề tài: Đảm bảo chất lượng giáo dục đại học: Nghiên cứu so sánh giữa Australia và Việt Nam.

Người có trách nhiệm trong nghiên cứu này:

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Email: ndong@AU.edu.au

Tôi,, đã đọc thông tin nghiên cứu của đề tài, tất cả các câu trả lời liên qua đến đề tài nghiên cứu đã được trả lời và đáp ứng được yêu cầu của tôi.

Đồng ý /Không đồng ý

Tôi đồng ý tham gia phỏng vấn và tôi có thể rút lui khỏi cuộc phỏng vấn bất cứ lúc nào.

Đồng ý /Không đồng ý

Tôi đồng ý rằng dữ liệu trong nghiên cứu được có thể được công bố bằng một bút danh

Đồng ý /Không đồng ý

Tôi đồng ý trích dẫn được dùng bằng một bút danh

Đồng ý /Không đồng ý

.....
Chữ ký người tham gia phỏng vấn

.....
Ngày tham gia

.....
Chữ ký người phỏng vấn

.....
Ngày tham gia

Certified by:



Appendix 12: Interview guide questions for academic leaders (English and Vietnamese)

**INTERVIEW GUIDE
QUESTIONS FOR ACADEMIC LEADERS RESPONSIBLE FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE**

1. Introduction

First of all, I would like to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. My name is Ngoc Son Dong and I am conducting this research as part of my PhD at the School of Education - University of New England. My supervisors are Dr. Brenda Wolodko and Dr. Sue Elliott. The research aims to explore your perspectives, attitudes and experiences that are related to quality assurance policies and practices at the undergraduate level in your university. Data will be collected through interviews and questionnaires.

The interview should take less than an hour. I would like to audio record the session because I don't want to miss any of your comments. All responses will be kept confidential. This means that your interview responses will only be shared with research team members and we will ensure that any information we include in our report does not identify you as the respondent. Remember, you don't have to talk about anything you don't want to and you may end the interview at any time. Are there any questions about what I have just explained?

Are you willing to participate in this interview? **Yes** **No**
Are you willing to be audio – recorded? **Yes** **No**

**Let's start ...please be aware of recording and the need to speak clearly,
Thanks.**

2. Participant Information

- Name:
- Current position:.....
- Qualifications:.....
- Years employed at university.....
- Interviewdate:.....
- Interview location:.....
- Starting time.....Finishing time:.....

3. Interview Questions Themes and Response note

Interview Questions /Themes	Response notes
<p>A. Perceptions of Quality Assurance</p> <p>1. How do you think quality assurance is understood within University of Education?</p> <p>2. How do you describe quality assurance in the University of Education?</p>	
<p>B. Quality Assurance Policies</p> <p>3. What quality assurance policies and principles inform your work?</p> <p>4. How effective are quality assurance policies at University of Education</p>	
<p>C. Quality Assurance Performance</p> <p>5. How is quality assurance implemented in the University of Education?</p> <p>6. What are the main strengths and weaknesses of quality assurance in the University of Education?</p>	
<p>D. Quality Control Measures at the Undergraduate Level in the University of Education?</p> <p>7. What are the major criteria for quality in teaching, learning and student research activities at the undergraduate level?</p> <p>8. What the main methods you use to measure quality assurance in your university?</p> <p>9. To what extent do you think academic staff implement quality assurance criteria in teaching, learning and student research activities?</p> <p>10. In what ways are staff involved in developing quality assurance policies and practices in the University of Education?</p>	
<p>E. Factors Affecting Quality Assurance</p> <p>11. What factors may have negatively impacted or enhanced quality assurance in the your university? (You may focus on the following: Curriculum development, course approval, monitoring of teaching and learning, staff, resources, administrative support and/others)?</p>	
<p>G. Perspectives on quality assurance development</p> <p>12. Based on your knowledge and experiences of quality assurance, what suggestions would you make for improving quality assurance in the University of Education? and generally in Vietnamese universities?</p>	

Thanks for your time and participation!

HƯỚNG DẪN PHÒNG VẤN CÂU HỎI CHO LÃNH ĐẠO

1. Giới thiệu

Trước hết, tôi xin cảm ơn anh (chị) đã dành thời gian để gặp tôi hôm nay. Tên tôi là Sơn và tôi đang tiến hành nghiên cứu này như là một phần của tiến sĩ của tôi tại Khoa Giáo dục - Đại học New England, Australia. Giáo viên hướng dẫn của tôi là Tiến sĩ Brenda Wolodko và Tiến sĩ Sue Elliott. Nghiên cứu này nhằm mục đích khám phá quan điểm, thái độ và kinh nghiệm của anh (chị) về các vấn đề có liên quan đến chính sách và thực tiễn công tác đảm bảo chất lượng ở cấp đại học tại trường đại học của anh (chị). Dữ liệu sẽ được thu thập thông qua các cuộc phỏng vấn và câu hỏi.

Cuộc phỏng vấn sẽ mất khoảng gần một giờ. Tôi muốn ghi âm nội dung cuộc phỏng vấn bởi vì tôi không muốn bỏ lỡ bất cứ ý kiến nào của anh (chị). Tất cả câu trả lời sẽ được giữ bí mật. Điều này có nghĩa rằng câu trả lời phỏng vấn của anh (chị) chỉ sẽ được chia sẻ với các thành viên trong nhóm nghiên cứu và chúng tôi sẽ đảm bảo rằng bất kỳ thông tin chúng tôi bao gồm trong báo cáo của chúng tôi cũng sẽ không xác định bạn là người trả lời. Hãy nhớ rằng, anh (chị) không cần phải nói về bất cứ điều gì bạn không muốn và bạn có thể kết thúc cuộc phỏng vấn bất cứ lúc nào. Anh (chị) có câu hỏi gì về những gì tôi vừa giải thích?

Anh (chị) có sẵn sàng để tham gia cuộc phỏng vấn này? Có Không
Anh (chị) có đồng ý cho tôi ghi âm lại cuộc phỏng vấn này không? Có Không

Chúng ta sẽ bắt đầu tiến hành phỏng vấn. Đề nghị anh (chị) nói rõ ràng và tập trung vào các câu hỏi

2. Thông tin người được phỏng vấn

- Tên:.....
- Vị trí:.....
- Học vị:.....
- Năm công tác:.....
- Ngày phỏng vấn:.....
- Địa điểm:.....
- Thời gian bắt đầu..... Thời gian kết thúc:.....

3. Câu hỏi phỏng vấn và ghi chép

Nội dung phỏng vấn	Ghi chép trả lời
<p>A. Nhận thức về đảm bảo chất lượng</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trong phạm vi Trường Đại học giáo dục, đảm bảo chất lượng được hiểu như thế nào? 2. Đảm bảo chất lượng được mô tả như thế nào tại trường đại học giáo dục? 	
<p>B. Các chính sách đảm bảo chất lượng</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Có những văn bản hay quy định nào về đảm bảo chất lượng đang áp dụng tại Đại học Giáo dục? 4. Mức độ hiệu quả ảnh hưởng của những văn bản, quy định về đảm bảo chất lượng tại Đại học Giáo dục là gì? 	
<p>C. Thực hiện đảm bảo chất lượng</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Đảm bảo chất lượng được thực hiện như thế nào tại Đại học Giáo dục? 6. Những điểm mạnh và hạn chế của đảm bảo chất lượng tại trường Đại học Giáo dục là gì? 	
<p>D. Đánh giá công tác đảm bảo chất lượng</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Những tiêu chí đánh giá cơ bản cho công tác đảm bảo chất lượng dạy học và nghiên cứu khoa học dành cho sinh viên bậc cử nhân là gì? 8. Các phương pháp cơ bản dùng đánh giá đảm bảo chất lượng ở trường Đại học Giáo dục là gì? 9. Anh (chị) nghĩ như thế nào về giảng viên trong việc thực hiện các tiêu chí đảm bảo chất lượng dạy học và công tác nghiên cứu khoa học tại trường Đại học Giáo dục? 10. Bằng cách nào để cán bộ giảng viên cùng tham gia vào việc nâng cao hiệu quả đảm bảo chất lượng trên cả hai mặt chính sách và thực hành? 	
<p>E. Yếu tố ảnh hưởng</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Những yếu tố ảnh hưởng tích cực và các yếu tố ảnh hưởng tiêu cực đến đảm bảo chất lượng tại trường Đại học Giáo dục là gì? (anh (chị) có thể tập trung vào các yếu tố như phát triển chương trình đào tạo, quản lý dạy và học, đội ngũ giáo viên, cơ sở vật chất...?) 	
<p>G. Giải pháp phát triển</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Dựa trên kiến thức và kinh nghiệm về công tác đảm bảo chất lượng anh (chị) có những đề xuất biện pháp gì để thúc đẩy sự phát triển công tác đảm bảo chất lượng tại trường Đại học Giáo dục nói riêng và các trường đại học giáo dục ở Việt Nam nói chung? 	

Trân trọng cảm ơn anh (chị)!

Certified by:



Appendix 13: Questionnaire for academic staff (English and Vietnamese)

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ACADEMIC STAFF

Please complete this questionnaire by writing in the blanks or ticking the most appropriate items listed below:

A. Personal Information

1. What is your highest academic qualification?

- a) Bachelor's degree
- b) Honor's degree
- c) Master's degree
- d) Doctoral degree
- e) If other (please specify)

2. What position do you hold in your university?

- a) Co-Lecturer
- b) Lecturer
- c) Principal lecturer
- d) Associate Professor
- e) Professor
- f) If other (please specify)

3. How long have you been teaching or working in the university sector?

- a) 0 - 4 years
- b) 5- 9 years
- c) 10 -14 years
- d) 15 – 19 years
- e) 20 – 25 years
- f) Over 25 years

4. On average, how many hours do you usually spend weekly on the following activities at during the academic semester?

- a. Teaching:..... hours (*include the total number of hours which you spend on preparation for teaching, teaching, marking exams, assignments, student enquires... /tutoring and meetings*).
- b. Research:.....hours
- c. Other academic tasks:.....hours

B. Perceptions about Quality Assurance

5. Select and rate the seven statements below regarding aspects of quality in your university

Quality Assurance statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strong disagree
a) Quality assurance has a significant role in the University of Education development in teaching, learning and research.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) My knowledge of quality assurance policies at the University of Education is sufficient.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) My quality assurance practices in the University of Education are effective.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Government policies have a significant role in quality assurance development in the University of Education.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Institutional policies have a significant role in quality assurance development in the University of Education.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Regular feedback from students is a helpful way to promote quality assurance system development.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Working conditions for staff promote quality improvement in the University of Education.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

C. Quality Assurance Practices

6. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the statements below by ticking the option that most closely describes your perceptions about current quality assurance practices.

Quality Assurance Practices in your university	Already implemented	Currently implementing	Not implemented	Planning to implement
a) Setting of mission and goals for the university.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Identification of strategies or functions required to implement the goals of the university.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Setting of quality criteria standards for teaching and learning across all programs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Setting of quality criteria standards for research activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Establishment of a management system to promote quality, and ensure that goals are achieved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Provision of guidelines and conditions to support academic staff in promoting quality teaching and learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Conduct of regular reviews of the study program and curriculum.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Conduct of regular staff meetings to discuss quality of student learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

i) Use of results from program/course reviews for improvement of student learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j) Building a quality culture (environment) and shared values across departments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. What methods/tools for quality assurance are available in the University of Education?

Methods/tools	Yes	No
a) Internal Review	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) External Audit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Self - Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Peer- Review	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Survey and Interview	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Focus Group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) If uses other methods/tools. Please specify:.....		

8. What do you consider to be the major benefits of quality assurance in the University of Education? If any (please specify).

.....

9. What do you consider to be the major disadvantages of quality assurance in the University of Education? If any (please specify).

.....

D. The Resources, Support Services and Working condition for Quality Assurance

10. Select and rate the statements below regarding physical resources to promote quality assurance.

Physical Resources: Materials	A rich variety of resources	Adequate	Limited	Not at all
a) Current textbooks.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Research monographs (materials, professional journals and articles).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Other materials from the library.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Physical resources: Infrastructure

Physical resources: Infrastructure	Yes	No
e) Do you have individual offices?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Do you have an office to provide privacy and space for preparing teaching materials and confidential discussions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Do you have a personal computer?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Is general administrative and staff support available?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you have other supports, please detail?

.....

12. Is there a budget reserved for academic staff to buy books, materials, etc for their teaching and research?

Yes

No

What other resources might improve the quality of your teaching and research?

.....

13. What is the average size of your undergraduate class?

- a) 0-24 students
- b) 25-49 students
- c) 50-99 students
- d) 100-199 students
- e) 200 + students
- h) If other.....

14. Is conducting research a required aspect of your university employment?

Yes

No

Are you involved in any research now?

Yes

No

In what ways might research be important to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the School of Education?

.....

E Your Perspectives on Current Quality Assurance in Your University

15. Are you satisfied with the quality assurance practices currently implemented at your institution?

- a) Completely
- b) Fairly
- c) A little bit
- d) Not at all

16. In your opinion, who should monitor quality assurance at your university? (Rank your options with 1 as the most appropriate for monitoring and 5 as the least appropriate for monitoring)

- a) The government
- b) Quality assurance agencies independent of government
- c) The university (academic leaders)
- d) Academic staff
- e) External stakeholders (relevant professional organisations and employers)

17. In your opinion, what are the most effective policies/practices in your faculty that promote quality assurance in the University of Education?

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.....
.....

18. In your opinion, what are the greatest obstacles to improving the quality of teaching and learning at your faculty?

.....
.....
.....

19. In your opinion, what are the greatest obstacles to improving the quality of research activities in your faculty?

.....
.....
.....

THANK YOU FOR RESPONDING TO THIS QUESTIONNAIRE!

BẢNG CÂU HỎI DÀNH CHO GIẢNG VIÊN ĐẠI HỌC GIÁO DỤC

Anh (chị) hãy hoàn thành bảng câu hỏi bằng cách trả lời các câu hỏi hoặc đánh dấu (✓) vào những câu phù hợp với ý kiến của bạn dưới đây:

A. Thông tin cá nhân

1. Trình độ học vấn?

- a) Đại học
- b) Sau đại học
- c) Thạc sĩ
- d) Tiến sĩ
- e) Khác (cụ thể là gì)

2. Chức danh hiện tại trong trường?

- a) Trợ giảng
- b) Giảng viên
- c) Giảng viên chính
- d) Phó Giáo sư
- e) Giáo sư
- f) Khác (cụ thể là gì)

3. Kinh nghiệm giảng dạy của anh chị?

- a) 0 - 4 năm
- b) 5- 9 năm
- c) 10 -14 năm
- d) 15 – 19 năm
- e) 20 – 25 năm
- f) Trên 25 năm

4. Trung bình mỗi tuần trong kỳ học anh (chị) dành bao nhiêu giờ cho các hoạt động dưới đây?

a) Giảng dạy:..... giờ (bao gồm tổng số thời gian dành cho công tác chuẩn bị, giảng dạy trên lớp, chấm bài giải đáp thắc mắc của sinh viên...và các cuộc họp chuyên môn).

b) Hoạt động nghiên cứu khoa học:..... giờ

c) Các hoạt động chuyên môn khác:..... giờ

B. Nhận thức về đảm bảo chất lượng

5. Hãy chọn và cho biết ý kiến của anh (chị) về các tuyên bố dưới đây về đảm bảo chất lượng tại trường Đại học Giáo dục.

Đảm bảo chất lượng tại	Rất đồng ý	Đồng ý	Không chắc chắn	Không đồng ý	Rất không đồng ý
a) Đảm bảo chất lượng có vai trò rất quan trọng trong việc nâng cao chất lượng dạy học và nghiên cứu khoa học.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Nhận thức của anh (chị) về chủ trương, chính sách và quy định về đảm bảo chất lượng tại trường Đại học Giáo dục là đầy đủ.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Công tác thực hiện yêu cầu những câu đảm bảo chất lượng trong các hoạt động chuyên môn của anh (chị) là đầy đủ.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Chủ trương, chính sách của chính phủ và Bộ Giáo dục có vai trò quan trọng đối với công tác đảm bảo chất lượng tại trường Đại học Giáo dục.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Chủ trương, chính sách của nhà trường có vai trò quan trọng đối với công tác đảm bảo chất lượng tại trường Đại học Giáo dục.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Phản hồi của sinh viên là một biện pháp tích cực nâng cao hiệu quả công tác đảm bảo chất lượng.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Điều kiện làm việc cho giảng viên là một yếu tố quan trọng thúc đẩy nâng cao hiệu quả công tác đảm bảo chất lượng tại trường Đại học Giáo dục.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

C. Thực hiện công tác đảm bảo chất lượng

6. Hãy cho biết ý kiến của anh (chị) về những tuyên bố dưới đây bằng cách đánh dấu (✓) vào thực trạng đảm bảo chất lượng tại trường Đại học Giáo dục.

Đảm bảo chất lượng thực hiện tại Đại học Giáo dục	Đã thực hiện	Đang thực hiện	Chưa thực hiện	Đánh có kế hoạch thực
a) Xác định nhiệm vụ của nhà trường	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Có chiến lược và giải pháp thực hiện các mục tiêu chiến lược của nhà trường.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Xác định các tiêu chí đánh giá cho các chương trình dạy học.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Xác định các tiêu chí đánh giá cho các hoạt động nghiên cứu khoa học.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Thiết lập các hệ thống quản lý đảm bảo chất lượng và thực hiện các mục tiêu đảm bảo chất lượng.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Hướng dẫn đầy đủ và cung cấp các điều kiện cần thiết cho cán bộ giảng viên trong việc thúc đẩy chất lượng dạy và học.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Thực hiện đánh giá thường xuyên đối với các chương trình nghiên cứu và các chương trình giảng dạy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Thực hiện các cuộc họp một cách thường xuyên thảo luận về chất lượng học tập của sinh viên.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Sử dụng kết quả đánh giá thường xuyên của các chương trình giảng dạy và khoá học trong việc nâng cao chất lượng học tập của sinh viên.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j) Xây dựng văn hoá chất lượng trong trường và chia sẻ văn hoá chất	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

lượng giữa các đơn vị.				
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7. Những phương pháp và công cụ kiểm định nào dưới đây đang được sử dụng tại Trường Đại học Giáo dục?

Phương pháp/công cụ đánh giá	Có	Không
a) Đánh giá trong	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Đánh giá ngoài	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Tự đánh giá	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Được đánh giá bởi trường đại học khác	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Điều tra và khảo sát	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Thảo luận nhóm	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Phương pháp khác.....		

8. Anh (chị) hãy cho biết những hiệu quả cơ bản nổi bật của công tác kiểm định chất lượng giáo dục tại trường Đại học giáo dục?

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9. Anh (chị) hãy cho biết những hạn chế cơ bản của công tác kiểm định chất lượng giáo dục tại trường Đại học giáo dục?

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D. Cơ sở vật chất, dịch vụ và điều kiện làm việc

10. Hãy chọn và tích vào những điều kiện hiện tại đảm bảo cho hoạt động kiểm định chất lượng.

Tài liệu phục vụ	Rất đầy đủ	Đầy đủ	Hạn chế	Rất hạn chế
a) Giáo trình cập nhật.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Tài liệu và cơ sở vật chất phục vụ nghiên cứu (phòng thí nghiệm, phòng chuyên dụng, tạp chí, sách báo, tài liệu tham khảo chuyên ngành...).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Tài liệu và trang thiết bị vật chất khác từ thư viện.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Cơ sở vật chất trang thiết bị cá nhân

Cơ sở vật chất trang thiết bị cá nhân	Có	Không
a) Có phòng làm việc riêng tại trường?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Có phòng họp chuyên môn với đồng nghiệp tại trường?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Có máy tính cá nhân do trường cung cấp?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Có nhân viên giúp đỡ và hỗ trợ trong giảng dạy và nghiên cứu khoa học?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Anh (chị) hãy cho biết thêm các dịch vụ hỗ trợ khác tại trường, khoa, nếu có?

.....
.....
.....

12. Có khoản tiền hỗ trợ cá nhân hàng năm trong việc mua sắm tài liệu, sách, báo ...phục vụ cho công tác giảng dạy và nghiên cứu khoa học?

Có

Không

Theo anh (chị) nhà trường cần có thêm những nguồn cơ sở vật chất nào để nâng cao chất lượng công tác giảng dạy và nghiên cứu khoa học tại trường Đại học Giáo dục?

.....
.....
.....

13. Số lượng sinh viên trong lớp học của anh chị là?

- a) 0-24 sinh viên
- b) 25-49 sinh viên
- c) 50-99 sinh viên
- d) 100-199 sinh viên
- e) 200 + sinh viên
- h) Khác.....

14. Hoạt động nghiên cứu khoa học là yêu cầu bắt buộc đối với giảng viên tại trường Đại học Giáo dục?

Đúng

Không

Anh (chị) hiện có đang tiến hành công trình nghiên cứu nào không?

Có

Không

Anh (chị) có đề xuất gì để nâng cao hiệu quả của công tác nghiên cứu khoa học đối với việc nâng cao chất lượng dạy và học tại trường Đại học Giáo dục?

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E Quan điểm của anh (chị) về công tác đảm bảo chất lượng tại trường Đại học Giáo dục.

15. Anh (chị) có hài lòng về hệ thống đảm bảo chất lượng đang được áp dụng tại trường?

- e) Rất nhiều
- f) Khá nhiều
- g) Rất ít
- h) Không chút nào cả

16. Theo ý kiến của anh (chị) tổ chức nào có vai trò quan trọng trong việc quản lý, giám sát đảm bảo chất lượng giáo dục tại trường Đại học Giáo dục (hãy sắp xếp theo thứ tự 1 quan trọng nhất, 5 ít quan trọng nhất)

- h) Bộ giáo dục
- i) Cục khảo thí kiểm định chất lượng – Bộ Giáo dục
- j) Ban giám hiệu (lãnh đạo đại học)
- k) Giảng viên đại học
- l) Tổ chức đánh giá ngoài (nhóm giáo sư hoặc nhà tuyển dụng)

15. Theo ý kiến anh (chị) những quy định hoặc thực tiễn công tác đảm bảo chất lượng nào nổi bật nhất tại Khoa có vai trò quan trọng nâng cao hiệu quả công tác kiểm định chất lượng tại trường Đại học Giáo dục?

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16. Theo anh (chị), những trở ngại lớn nhất đối với việc nâng cao chất lượng giảng dạy và học tập ở trường Đại học Giáo dục là gì?

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17. Theo anh (chị), những thuận lợi lớn nhất đối với việc nâng cao chất lượng giảng dạy và học tập ở trường Đại học Giáo dục là gì?

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Trân trọng cảm ơn sự hợp tác của anh (chị)!

Certified by:

