

Vietnam

1 SITUATION: Two public universities, basically the same size (over 6k) – representative

2 Internal Structure and Decision-making

2.1 Organisation and decision-making body

An HEI usually consists of academic body(ies), decision-making body(ies) and an advisory/supervisory body. As for the composition of these bodies at the Vietnamese universities in question, the academic body consists mostly of internal stake holders, as does the advisory/supervisory body and the decision-making body if it exists at the particular institution.

As for determining the mission and the overall strategy of an institution, the biggest influence stays with the government (Ministry of Education etc.) and the institutional leadership (leader, leadership team etc.). While at some institutions influence over these issues lays with all the other parts of the institution as well (national organisations, regional authorities, faculty leadership, academic and administrative staff, students, external stakeholders); at others these entities have little to no influence in the matters of the university's mission and strategy.

The formal roles of the groups involved in governance of an HEI can change over time; in the last 10 years, basically all the governing groups (governing board, leader of the university, faculty leadership) gained authority over time, the level and type of the specific powers depending on the university.

2.2. Characteristics of Institutional Government Structures

The Vietnamese institutions in question evaluate their government structures as being more or less characterised by:

- *openness* (clear procedures, access to information)
- *accountability* (monitoring & reporting systems)
- *effectiveness* (clear objectives and procedures)
- *coherence* (internal policies integrated across university bodies)

Other valid characteristics include *significant participation from staff and students* and *inclusion of external stakeholders*; however, these do not apply for all the universities. Nevertheless, the institutions would like all the aforementioned qualities to become an integral part of their characteristics and they are working on a constant improvement of their status.

As for further characteristics, the universities usually see themselves as

- *enhancing the strategic competences of the institution (long-term vision)*
- *creating a strong focus on the quality of teaching & learning*
- *characterized by clear responsibilities and duties*
- *stimulating increased public-private partnerships & entrepreneurialism*
- *capable of dealing with future challenges*

The HEIs also characterise themselves rather *bureaucratic (time-consuming)* and while some see themselves as being *too dominated by the institutional leadership*, it does not apply for the rest.

2.3 Institutional Structure

The HEI administration at the universities in question usually consists of an academic body, decision-making body and a consultative body. After any internal election, voting, decision– making,

the HEI administration submits and recommends final decision to Ministry of Education and Training which sets the final official decision. The governing board plays a purely consultative role in the process, as the institutional leadership works under the control of governmental systems.

2.3.1 Governing Board (e.g. University Board, Rectorate Board, Academic Senate, Academic Council, Academic Board, Board of Directors, Institution Collegium etc.)

The role of governing boards at Vietnamese institutions is purely consultative as they have only a low degree of independence of the Higher Education Authority. Nevertheless, they review the strategies set by the HEI leadership team every 1-2 years. In other aspects, the situation at the institutions might differ; the TACTIC research could trace two models:

- Model A: The governing board is composed of Leadership Team, Head of Party, Labour Union representatives, university academic and administrative staff, external related government officials, and industries, and these members are elected by academic and administrative staff of the university. This governing board review data and information to evaluate the performance of the HEI (e.g. HUST).
- Model B: The governing board is composed of university academic and administrative staff, students, and external government officials. Members of the board are appointed by external committee, based on competitive search. This board does not review the performance data to evaluate the HEI's progress (e.g. HCMUT).

2.3.2 Leader of the HEI (e.g. Rector, President, Director, Managing Director-Dean, etc.)

Leader of the HEI presents one of the essential elements of the decision-making and managing body of the HEI, therefore, universities set elaborate requirements for the potential candidates as well as for the selection process itself. There are differences between the HEIs that took part in the TACTIC research:

- Model A: The selection of the university leader is based on internal election, choosing from internal candidates only. Afterwards, the President candidate is nominated to the Ministry of Education and Training for official approval. The selected leader's service is limited to two consecutive terms only, and moreover, they are excluded from leadership service at any other institution after their time as a Leader at the particular HEI (e.g. HUST).
- Model B: The leader is selected on the basis of double mechanism, consisting of a consultative internal poll and political appointment. The candidates that apply for the Leader position can come from another academic institution in the country. The selected leader's service is limited to two consecutive terms only, however, they are not exclusive of/ excluded from leadership service at any other institution after their time as a Leader at the particular HEI (e.g. HCMUT).

2.3.3 Leadership team (e.g. Vice-Rectors, Vice-Presidents, Deans, etc.)

The leadership team is the second highest decision-making body after the Leader/Head of the HEI. While some universities select their leadership team on the basis of internal poll, at others the leadership team is appointed via a combination of consultative internal poll, Rector's recommendation and political appointment.

2.3.4 HEI's authority

The Vietnamese HEIs are free to define their academic structure, programs, and course content, even though some restrictions may apply. The same applies for the student admission policy as the institutions are allowed to set their own student recruitment rules, though their powers might be limited. When determining the access policies & admission criteria for students at the HEI, there are different levels of influence at the institutions. Either the most influence is retained by the institutional and faculty leadership only (e.g. HUST), or the decision – apart from those mentioned above – can be influenced significantly also by the government/Ministry of Education and the academic staff (e.g. HCMUT).

When it comes to the actual influence over the decision to introduce a new study programme at an HEI, there is variance between the institutions in question: whilst at some the most influence lies in the hands of faculty leadership and the academic staff, at other institutions it is the government, institutional and faculty leadership, that have the most control over the changes in the study programme offer.

2.3.5 Student involvement

The student involvement in the management of the HEIs differs in case of the Vietnamese institutions that took part in the TACTIC research. At some universities student participation in management of the university is not allowed; but on the other hand, other universities allow students to participate in the decision-making process at the institution through membership in the Student's Chamber of the Academic Senate or similar decision-making body. Their roles mainly include engaging in activities connected to students' membership in committees and other official bodies at HEI, and pursuing activities connected with HEI's internal rules and their changes

2.4 Necessary Improvement

As the HEIs have strategic plans for all the aspects for their management, they realise the shortcomings of their leadership. The HEIs involved were asked to list the improvements most needed at their HEI and the following section lists the main issues that should be accomplished:

- Stronger leadership with more independent in administration
- Clearer regulations on all administration levels (Ministry, national university, internal administration...)
- Financial autonomy at university level
- University authorisation for training
- Research autonomy at faculty level
- Training/ academic/research activities driven to the industry's need and meet the international/ industrial quality
- Improving working efficiency
- IT-based management tools in administration and academic and research management, student and staff database, dashboard

3 Finance and Funding

3.1 The sources of income

Funding is one of the main pillars of running an institution since the incoming finances allow the HEI to function in every sphere. Therefore, it is important to obtain the main sources of income that can provide for the institution financially. The Vietnamese institutions in question have several main sources of income:

- governmental grants
- external research funding (foundations, charities, trusts etc.)
- academic fees (undergraduate and postgraduate level)
- international funding from foreign organisations, e.g. the EU

Apart from these, universities gain funds from private sector as well from their own investments.

For HEIs the sources of income vary and apart from the main sources mentioned above, there are also some additional sources of funding that might be used. The HEIs involved in TACTIC research can borrow money from commercial banks when needed, although some restrictions may apply. The institutions are not allowed to issue bonds in the financial markets; but they are allowed to retain at least a part of the surplus from annual budget/ their self-generated funds and they can constitute and use endowment into a certain degree. Some universities are rather flexible in use of available resources, such as public budget allocated as block grant, and they retain partial authority to sell own buildings, facilities and equipment.

3.2 Internal financial policies and procedures

At the Vietnamese HEIs the internal issues regarding the financial matters are influenced the most by the government and the decisions of Ministry of Education. In some cases, the institutional leadership retains much influence as well (e.g. HUST). As for internal funding, the institutions can have several specialised funding systems established (mostly at various stages of development):

- funding system for rewarding administrative /technical performance
- funding systems for rewarding teaching performance & number of graduates
- institutional procedures for the commercialisation of knowledge

3.3 Tuition fees

When it comes to tuition fees, the HEIs in Vietnam have a fee-setting authority, but there is a ceiling on the fees. They charge tuition fees, though the amount can vary based on:

- level of study
- type of course the student attends
- special needs
- the exchange/partner university status of the student

4 HR Management

Managing staff at a university is one of the crucial task for the HEI's management. To simplify such a task it is convenient to set up an HR department. According to the TACTIC research, it seems to be a standard for HEIs in Vietnam to have a specialised HR department. These HR departments are mainly responsible for:

- Employee recruitment
- Managing wages and salaries (rewarding - e.g., managing pay and benefit systems)
- Performance appraisal
- Employee benefits design (providing benefits and incentives)
- Resolving disputes (between staff)

Their other responsibilities might include training/coaching/orienting or personnel needs planning.

4.1 Employee Recruitment

The employee recruitment strategies are crucial in the HR selection process. The number of staff and available positions at the HEIs are determined mainly by the Ministry of Education, in some cases in co-operation with the HEI. The most common sources of employment are mainly the HEIs own websites which can be supplemented by print adverts, employee referrals or educational institutions' recommendation. The selection and assessment of the candidates are mainly based on professional interviews, which can be sometimes complemented by additional performance and language tests, IT-usage assessment and professional/academic skills evaluation. The research further shows that the institutions in Vietnam employ civil servants. As for the complete recruitment and dismissal process, the HEIs in Vietnam are free to dismiss non-performing staff, but the process is quite difficult in practise.

4.2 Wages and Salaries

When it comes to setting salaries, public and state HEIs are either limited by a certain margin of movement or the level of salaries is set by the civil service conditions.

As for determining the conditions of employment for the staff of the HEI, the level of influence over determining the issue differs at various institutions: while at some universities it is the institutional and faculty leadership together with the academic staff and the administrative/support staff who have the biggest say in the matter, at others the institutional and faculty leadership have the most influence over the decision.

4.3 Training

The HEIs provide a rather limited array of training for their staff; there might be only a safety procedures induction and sometimes pedagogy/ teaching skills training. Sometimes there might be external training contracts for management and language skills.

4.4. Strategic Planning

As for the HRM strategic planning, the HEI's HRM executives are mostly aware of HEI's needs and strategies. Usually, there are efforts taken to generate awareness amongst the employees about the HEI's financial position, staff and students' needs, quality of functioning and so on. The HRM teams are endeavouring to systematically ascertain the organization's human resource requirements and they also formulate plans for satisfying the necessary requirements. As for the computerised human resource information system, that is available at the institutions with developed ISM (e.g. HCMUT); however, it presents a problem at those universities lacking proper IT support (e.g. HUST). The institutions taking part in the TACTIC research do not have a proper formal policy of career planning and development; nevertheless, they encourage employees to suggest teaching or management improvements, so these could be developed into the possible strategic planning.

5 Information Systems Management, IT development

In the rapidly developing world of the new technologies where information needs to be shared as fast as possible IT integration is crucial for the university management, the more when it comes to a developing institution which might need to evolve their IT systems even more rapidly to be able to compete. Realising the need, the HEIs have defined a specific strategy for information systems and IT. The institutions have a centralised, but non-integrated information system: data on different activities are not gathered in one data warehouse. There is a marked difference between the ISM integration throughout the institutions in Vietnam; the TACTIC research comes up with two specific models:

5.1 Model A: Well-developed ISM

ISM manages basically all of the agendas available: administration, student registration/recruitment, human resources, finances/accountability, library management, IT services, course organisation (planning, logistic), communication and information, internal management, HR records and facilities and services. Nonetheless, the institution understands the need for further development and integration; although there is the issue of lack of any strategies regarding the IT development and not enough resources to perform the task. Information system is an important tool which provides a platform for:

- Information transparency
- Strategic planning
- Annual strategic plan-making
- Decision-making processes
- Daily operational activity handling

As the results above show, ISM tools cover many areas of the institution's activities, and therefore, it is crucial that the institution have set information security policy the purpose of which is to keep the information safe.

5.2 Model B: ISM to be developed

The information systems cover only administration, student registration/recruitment and human resources. Its users consider the whole IT system to be really unhelpful; the reasons for the systems failing is lack of defined strategies, not enough resources and no organisational integration, including co-operation between the HEI's sections. Nevertheless, the institution needs a working ISM in the whole university to synchronise with all local system of HEI's sections/ departments/ schools, as it is a key development tool for an HEI to expand and sustain; it simplifies the internal and administration processes, contains all records and databases, which are an excellent tool for development and reporting. Another crucial point is to set appropriate information security policy to protect the information kept in the HEI's information system.

6 Internationalisation

The Vietnamese HEIs that participated in the research do have specialised international relations offices, with a rather adequate number of staff that could manage to work on the internationalisation strategies sufficiently. Some of them meet all the needs of the institution and some are still being further developed. HEIs develop their internationalisation by various strategies, most often through:

- developing cooperation agreements with international HEI
- developing student exchange programs
- participating in international education projects
- participating in international research projects
- participating in international conferences and seminars
- participating in international networks
- developing courses taught in a foreign language

These strategies are sometimes also further endorsed by inviting and recruiting international teachers and researchers, as well as participating in student fairs.

Participating in international projects aiming at foreign students, who can then share their experience back home and they can also become future researchers and collaborators at the

institution, is one of the most effective ways of HEI's internationalisation. The results of the TACTIC research show that all/both of the HEIs participate in at least several international projects, with some of the universities taking part in up to 178 of these. The numbers of international students at the interviewed HEIs range between 2-3%, which is the biggest share of international students among the participant Asian HEIs, however the number is still rather low. To support this influx of international students, HEIs include a number of foreign language programmes into their curriculum, taught partly or even fully in a foreign language; the TACTIC data show that the institutions offer 5-14 % of foreign language programmes. The low statistics are also present when the foreign nationality staff comes in question, both academic and administrative; some universities do not employ foreign staff at all and those that do employ only an insignificant number of them.

7 Quality Assurance

It is one of the essential tasks of an HEI to ensure adequate quality of the research and education they provide. All of the respondent HEIs in Vietnam have a strategic plan (or its equivalent) which includes the institutional mission, goals and priorities that are to be maintained. Moreover, the institutions have an institutional QA policy statement, which is in some cases further endorsed by additional documents. The HEIs that took part in the research have implemented their QA systems between 2005 and 2009. As for the QA systems creation itself, the concepts were based on the requirements of the national QA agency which developed the standards and guidelines for this. In some cases these concepts may be further adjusted based on various consultation rounds among the academic and administrative staff as well as students, or on pilot projects that were conducted by some units and the resulting good practices were then implemented.

7.1 Internal QA

Every institution takes care of their own quality levels and internal QA is a way to constantly improve the processes inside the HEI and to elaborate on the external guidelines provided by the state institutions. The research has come up with two different models of internal QA:

7.1.1 Model A (e.g. HUST)

There is a centralised QA unit with specialised staff that monitors teaching and learning only. The institutional leadership has the most influence over determining the assessment of teaching & learning quality. As for the institutional system for the evaluation of teaching and learning, it has been just recently developed.

As for the feedback to the strategic planning, the institution has defined a set of key performance indicators and follows its progress based on them. Moreover, some of the institutions adhere to the ISO 9000 standard for administration processes. The institutional leadership also has the most influence over determining the assessment of teaching & learning quality. The university has also an institutional system for evaluation of research and well as institutional procedures for rewarding research performance that are in use for at least 3 years already.

The internal QA relies mostly on the feedback of people connected to the institution who can assess the quality levels of the HEI's activities from their point of view. There are various ways in which they are involved in the formal quality assurance processes:

- *The governance bodies* where members are entitled to vote include only institutional leadership.
- When it comes to the *formal consultation bodies*, these include the faculty/department level leadership.

- As for the *self-evaluations or other evaluation activities*, the participants include the administrative staff only.
- As long as *providing information on the issues at stake/ perspectives of development* is concerned, those are given by external stakeholders, such as employers, experts etc.
- *Regular surveys*, that are an important source of QA information, are filled in by students and alumni.

7.1.2 Model B (e.g. HCMUT)

The internal quality assurance processes are covered by a centralised QA unit with specialised staff, which is then further supported by the rector and specially assigned vice-rector in charge of QA issues, by a unit responsible for pedagogical innovation, by contact persons in charge of QA within their unit and by faculty/ department/ programme level quality committees. These internal QA assessors control the quality of teaching and learning, research, service to society, student support services and governance and administration of the HEI.

The assessment of teaching & learning quality seems to be handled mostly internally as well, as the most influence over this assessment lies in the hands of institutional and faculty leadership, academic staff, students and administrative staff. As for the institutional system for the evaluation of teaching and learning, it is still in development. The institution is also developing a system for evaluation of research as well as institutional procedures for rewarding research performance.

As for the feedback to the strategic planning, institutions have implemented several strategies:

- The institutional leadership evaluates annually the progress made in terms of achieving the goals set by the institution.
- The faculties/ relevant units conduct regular self-evaluations to analyse their contribution to the achievement of institutional strategic goals.
- The institution has defined a set of key performance indicators and follows its progress based on them.
- The institutional strategy and the achievement of the goals set in it are revisited when the document is revised regularly.

The internal QA relies mostly on the feedback of people connected to the institution who can assess the quality levels of the HEI's activities from their point of view. There are various ways in which they are involved in the formal quality assurance processes:

- *The governance bodies* where members are entitled to vote include only institutional and faculty/department leadership.
- When it comes to the *formal consultation bodies*, these include mainly the opinions of both institutional and faculty/department leadership, external stakeholders and alumni.
- As for the *self-evaluations or other evaluation activities*, the participants include the academic and administrative staff, students, institutional and faculty/department leaders, external stakeholders and alumni.
- As long as *providing information on the issues at stake/ perspectives of development* is concerned, those are again given by the academic and administrative staff, students, institutional and faculty/department leaders, external stakeholders and alumni.
- *Regular surveys*, that are an important source of QA information, are filled in by the academic and administrative staff, students, institutional and faculty/department leaders, and external stakeholders.

7.2 External QA

The quality of HEI's processes is not assessed by their internal QA only, but also by the assessment from the external authorities who should provide objective evaluation. The HEIs in question are accredited or externally adjudged in relation to quality assurance or enhancement at institutional level. They are all regularly assessed by the external authorities every 1-2 years.

7.2.1 Institutional level

On the institutional level, the universities follow the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) quality standards, which are regularly assessed through an external MOET audit. Moreover, the university management teams survey feedback from students, alumni, employers, and external stakeholders to create strategies for further improvement. Some universities have also set up their own Advisory Council for Pedagogy which is to serve as an advisory body to the institution management. And another way how the institutions assure the proper quality levels is the ISO 9001 certification for quality management systems which is followed at some of the universities as well.

7.2.2 Programme level

As for the programme QA, the institutions again follow the MOET quality standards set for the individual study programmes. Then there are several international QA standards that set the quality levels for specific study programmes and award programme accreditation:

- AUN-QA: Quality assurance of HEIs in ASEAN
- ABET: Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology
- CTI-ENAAE: European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education awarding the EUR-ACE label in co-operation with Commission des Titres d'Ingénieur

7.3 Possible improvement

The institutions in Vietnam understand the constant need to develop and improve the quality control to provide the best education and research conditions available. Therefore, there is a list of the various improvement goals the institutions would like to reach:

- further promotion of quality culture
- spreading QA and QC awareness
- reinforcing capacities for QA staff
- further administrative training
- clearer regulations in each level regarding the rights and responsibilities
- continuous programme and training evaluation in accordance with AUN-QA criteria, and eventually, becoming a member of AUN-QA network
- setting up co-operation with Asia-Pacific Alliance for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
- setting up co-operation with other higher education QA organizations in the world

8 Change Management

Change management presents a possible solution and systemisation of the changes that are happening throughout the whole institution. Its task is to create a comprehensive strategy for communicating, co-ordinating, and implementing the changes that are happening at the HEI so that everyone is acquainted with the change processes well enough; and therefore, everyone can co-ordinate their work with the change strategies. For a developing institution, change management may

be crucial as it can systematise the ongoing changes and make them even more effective. The research again shows that there is a marked difference between the approach towards the change management at various institutions.

8.1 Model A: Lack of Change Management

The institution has no change management strategies set; there is only little change management applied and it is mainly because there are no strategies defined yet by the management. As for the changes themselves, those are usually suggested by the leader of the university or the HEI's top management who also approve them. The responsibility to implement the said changes then lies with the leader and top management, as well as with the staff and students.

When it comes to the change management process itself, the institution claims to favour changes to a certain degree, nevertheless, the change implementation is markedly slow. Even though the relationships between the HEI's staff and the management team can be described as effective, the staff is seldom informed about the planned changes at the early stage and they are not always given enough information to understand why the organisational change needs to happen. The institution rarely communicates with staff when going through the said changes and the staff does not always have an opportunity to comment about (organisational) change before, during and after it has happened.

Although the management team does lead by setting an example, there is no clear map of governance arrangements for the change and the strategy lacks any effective procedures for monitoring the change; moreover, the institution does not assess the risk of the change procedure, neither has it created strategies to mitigate the risks. The final change might not be immediately evident once it is achieved, as the ultimate objective has not been defined clearly. The HEI's management/executive team do not communicate with the staff regularly and the managing team does not explain the specific impact on individual employees. Furthermore, there are no mechanisms in place to ensure the changed state becomes the normal way of working.

8.2 Model B: Well-developed Change Management

There is a clearly defined change management strategy with comprehensive approach for managing change which is being applied in multiple projects; with this strategy the institution evolves through long periods of stability with short bursts of fundamental change. For the institution the change management plays an important role for effectiveness and transparency in operation and adaptation to social needs. Their strategy is step-by-step change which concentrates on educational programs, management system and staff training.

As for the changes themselves, those are usually suggested by the leader of the university, HEI's top management and institution's employees. Those changes can be then approved by the institution's leader or top management. Afterwards, the implementation of the said changes is a responsibility of the leader and top management, who suggested and approved of the changes, as well as of the staff and students.

When it comes to the change management process, the institution claims to favour changes to a certain degree and they implement set changes rather quickly. The communication from the HEI's management team to staff/employees involved in implementation of change management is seen as effective and their overall decision-making processes as rather efficient, as they consider the relationships between the HEI's staff and the management team working reliably.

To describe the internal change management processes themselves, the staff is often informed about the planned changes at the early stage and they are usually given enough information to

understand why the organisational change needs to happen. However, the institution not always communicates with staff regularly when going through the said changes and the staff does not always have an opportunity to comment about (organisational) change before, during and after it has happened.

Nevertheless, the system is not ideal yet. There is no clear map of governance arrangements for the change and the strategy lacks any effective procedures for monitoring the change; moreover, the institution does not assess the risk of the change procedure, neither has it created strategies to mitigate the risks. The final change might not be immediately evident once it is achieved, as the ultimate objective has not been defined clearly. On the other hand, the management team does lead by setting an example. The HEI's management/executive team communicate with the staff regularly, using a range of communication methods and styles. The managing team explains the specific impact on individual employees and there are mechanisms in place to ensure the changed state becomes the normal way of working.