

Students' Perception of Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Vietnam: Empirical Evidence and Implications for Face-to-Face and Alternative Modes of Learning

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Abstract: Students are considered the most essential internal stakeholders in the higher education sector. They play a significant role in quality assurance processes. This study aims to investigate students' engagement with and perceptions of Vietnamese higher education quality assurance. The study conducted an online survey questionnaire for undergraduate students in five major cities across Vietnam. The researchers utilised convenience sampling method to draw a representative sample from the target population. The 1,323 valid responses were collected and analysed using IBM's SPSS Statistical Tool. The results show that most of the Vietnamese students were aware of quality policy and quality assurance models implemented at their institutions. The purposes of quality assurance and the focus level of quality assurance were also reported on by the majority of respondents. However, the positive change as to the results of quality assurance implementation was not clearly observed by the students. The paper concludes that Vietnamese students were involved in several major quality assurance processes, and they were aware of only important quality assurance tools implemented at their university.

Keywords: quality management, student engagement, quality assurance processes, internal stakeholders, Vietnam.

Introduction

Higher education institutions across the world rely on quality assurance processes and instruments to control, ensure and enhance the quality of their programmes. At the institutional level, quality assurance refers to all attempts to establish, monitor, and raise educational delivery standards so that students can get the best out of their learning experience (Garwe, 2015). Quality assurance includes all aspects of university life, including the quality of teaching, learning, research, management and support services. Among various quality assurance activities, higher education institutions work closely with stakeholders who are government officials, employers, alumni, academic staff, support staff and students. These stakeholders provide feedback that substantially contributes to higher



education institutions' policies and effectiveness (Beerkens & Udam, 2017; Leisyte & Westerheijden, 2014). The importance of student engagement in quality assurance and the enhancement of teaching and learning is widely recognised (Charteris & Smardon, 2019; McCann et al., 2021; Zeybek, 2022). Engaging students in quality assurance and improvement practices shows the fundamental characteristics of higher education, in which students are not only recipients of services from universities but also play a key role in deciding their effectiveness (QAA, 2018). Moreover, students' participation in the quality assurance process has a positive impact on their learning and development, as well as increasing their motivation to learn (Isaeva et al., 2020).

In Vietnam, a developing country in Southeast Asia, quality assurance in higher education was officially commenced in the early 2000s. Initial results in both internal quality assurance and external quality assurance have been observed. However, quality assurance in Vietnamese higher education is still regarded as being at the nascent stage (Nguyen, 2021; Nguyen, Ta, et al., 2017). Student involvement in quality assurance processes has been reported at several higher education institutions. Nevertheless, the most common activity for this engagement is student participation in course evaluation (Pham, 2019). Given that the grassroots may have different views on Vietnamese student engagement in quality assurance, this study investigates students' perceptions of and experiences with quality assurance. Specifically, the study measures the extent to which Vietnamese students evaluate their understanding and awareness of quality policy, quality assurance models, purposes of quality assurance, quality assurance processes and instruments, and positive change as the result of quality assurance implementation. The research findings could help policymakers, institutional managers and quality assurance specialists make decisions on quality improvement for their programmes and institutions.

Literature Review

Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Quality assurance has been implemented in most of the higher education systems across the world. The concepts of quality assurance have become well-established and are widely used in the higher education sector (Elassy, 2015; Vlăsceanu et al., 2007). To begin, Harvey (2004-22) defines quality assurance as a process of gaining stakeholder trust that the offering (inputs, processes, and outputs) meets or exceeds basic criteria. Moreover, connecting quality assurance with achievement of standards, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in the UK (QAA, 2010) points out that quality assurance is "the means through which an institution ensures and confirms that the conditions are in place for students to achieve the standards set by it or by another awarding body" (p. 83). The expansion of quality assurance was due to the increase in the demand for higher education and the establishment of a significant number of private higher education providers. Although there are several quality assurance mechanisms, quality assurance serves three main purposes: quality control, accountability and continuous enhancement (Colling & Harvey, 1995; Lemaitre & Karakhanyan, 2018; Morest, 2009).

Quality assurance is a comprehensive strategy that encompasses all procedures in a higher education institution to serve students and other stakeholders in accordance with expected quality standards. The success of a quality assurance system is dependent on management's cooperation. As a result, quality assurance should also include strategy management, process management, and a measuring-

monitoring system that interact with one another to allow institutions to improve their operations (Kahveci et al., 2012). The most common activities that quality assurance processes cover include teaching and learning, research, service to society, student support services, and governance and management of the institution (Loukkola & Zhang, 2010). Similarly, according to Martin (2018), the popularity of quality assurance processes and tools was ranked as teaching and learning, governance and management, research, graduate employability, international cooperation, community outreach, and income generation.

Key Stakeholders in Higher Education

Stakeholder engagement has become an essential part of any university's planning and improvement agenda. Stakeholders are defined as "any group or individual who is affected by or can affect the achievement of an organisation's objectives" (Freeman, 1984, p. 46). In the higher education sector, lecturers, support staff, students, alumni, employers, professions and government are all stakeholders (Leisyte & Westerheijden, 2014; Temmerman, 2018). They are expected to contribute to a more effective and all-inclusive quality assurance system (Beerkens & Udam, 2017). Stakeholder involvement generally entails informing stakeholders about a university's policies and future intentions, as well as soliciting their feedback on both, particularly the latter. Stakeholder comments can then be included into the change management process properly (Temmerman, 2018).

In many higher education institutions, stakeholders are invited to serve on the university board and other advisory bodies (Stensaker & Vabø, 2013). Consequently, they play an important role in the institutional quality assurance processes. For example, their contributions could be for curriculum development and/or curriculum revision (Beerkens & Udam, 2017). Stakeholders raise issues related to the quality of the university including: (1) the quality of the programmes being offered, (2) the quality of the facilities, technology and resources that support the operation of the programmes, (3) the quality of the academic staff who develop and run the programmes, (4) the quality of the students being admitted into the programmes, and (5) the quality of the graduates being produced (Temmerman, 2018). Normally, stakeholders are categorised as internal stakeholders (institutional leaders, staff, students) and external stakeholders (alumni, businesses, professions, government) (Beerkens & Udam, 2017; Leisyte & Westerheijden, 2014).

Student Engagement in Quality Assurance

Students as internal stakeholders in higher education hold a place second only to academic staff. Students have gained a bigger "stake" in higher education institutions. In many countries, they are given legitimacy and power by national regulations. They are considered valuable stakeholders, especially in relation to institutional quality assurance. As customers, students provide essential feedback on teaching and other academic and non-academic support services. Moreover, students as stakeholders are expected to engage in subject and programme evaluation, and to be involved in quality assurance procedures at universities as equal partners (Leisyte & Westerheijden, 2014). Students can provide early notice and insight into issues of concern, as well as helpful and innovative recommendations for resolving difficulties within a programme and give comments that might improve course material and sequencing in ways that programme instructors may not have considered (Heath et al., 2021).

For evaluations of teachers, the quality of the academic staff and the teaching-learning experience were recognised as the most significant factors by students. They expected lecturers to be competent and up-to-date in their fields, as well as able to present entertaining and motivating information that was relevant to the real world (Temmerman, 2018). Student engagement in quality assurance can be through providing feedback on the subjects or programme they have taken, contributing to the development of the curricula, being involved in the institution decision-making processes, or representing student voices in a variety of ways like a student union or other representative bodies. Obviously, students' voices are being heard loudly and clearly these days, and their opinions are increasingly being treated seriously (Alaniska et al., 2006).

Research Questions

With the purposes of investigating Vietnamese students' perceptions of and experience with their engagement in higher education quality assurance activities, the research sought to answer the following questions:

1. What do Vietnamese students understand about the purposes of quality assurance?
2. What are Vietnamese students aware of in quality policy and quality assurance models implemented at their universities?
3. What do Vietnamese students know about quality assurance processes and instruments that are being used in their universities?
4. How aware are Vietnamese students of the positive change in their university activities as the result of quality assurance implementation?

Methods

Research Methodology

This study employed the quantitative research paradigm to examine Vietnamese students' engagement in and perception of quality assurance in Vietnamese higher education institutions. The study utilised a cross-sectional, descriptive and comparative survey. According to Cummings (2017), empirical researchers utilise cross-sectional designs to characterise a population of interest at a single point in time (universe). Specifically, researchers use cross-sectional approaches to collect data but do not modify factors. A census study is a popular form of cross-sectional design in which a population is surveyed at one moment in time to identify characteristics such as age, gender, and geographic location, among others.

Cross-sectional studies can be descriptive. In descriptive studies, the data collected mostly aim to provide estimates of prevalence of traits such as behaviour, attitudes, or knowledge (Kesmodel, 2018). Consequently, the current study utilised a cross-sectional descriptive survey to collect data regarding students' engagement in and perception of quality assurance implementation in higher education institutions in Vietnam.

Population and Sample

The target population for this study was students studying in five major cities across Vietnam — Hanoi, Vinh, Hue, Thai Nguyen, and Ho Chi Minh City — with a total population of around 1,500,000 students. Convenience sampling was used to select students from universities located in these cities.

Specifically, a Google Forms survey was sent to any students studying in universities in these cities. In total, the survey received 1,323 valid responses. The socio-demographic characteristics of the sample are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Participants' Demography

	Number	Percentage
Gender		
Male	179	13.5%
Female	1138	86.0%
I do not wish to say	6	0.5%
Grade		
First-year students	255	19.3%
Second-year students	155	11.7%
Third-year students	456	34.5%
Fourth-year students	443	33.5%
Fifth-year students	9	0.7%
Others	5	0.3%
Age		
18	223	16.9
19	130	9.8
20	344	26.0
21	385	29.1
22	193	14.6
23	22	1.7
Others	26	1.9
Place of Study		
HCMC	553	41.8
Hanoi	263	19.9
Hue	164	12.4
Thai Nguyen	181	13.7
Vinh	162	12.2

Instrument Design

The survey questionnaire was derived from an instrument developed for an international research project supported by the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) in 2015-2016. The main aim of this survey was to measure students' engagement in and perception of quality management activities at their higher education institution (HEI) (Martin, 2017). The questionnaire was translated into Vietnamese and adapted for use in the Vietnamese context. There were four main parts, and 60 close-ended questions, in the questionnaire: (1) personal information of respondents, (2) quality policy and quality assurance model, (3) processes and tools used for quality assurance, and (4) survey and evaluation. The scale applied in this questionnaire is described in Table 2.

Table 2: Overview of the Survey Questionnaire

Category	Item	Structured Response
Awareness of quality policies, quality assurance handbook, quality assurance processes and instruments,	2.2, 2.3, 2.4, Part 3	Do not know, No, Yes
Perception of importance level of quality assurance	2.1, 2.5	0 = Do not know, 1 = Not important, 2 = Not really important, 3 = Moderately important, 4 = Important, 5 = Very important
Focus level of quality assurance at the university	2.6	0 = Do not know, 1 = Not at all, 2 = Not much, 3 = Moderate, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = A lot
Frequency of participating in surveys	4.1	0 = Do not know, 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always
Positive changes from evaluation results	4.2	0 = Do not know, 1 = No change, 2 = Change a little, 3 = Change some, 4 = Change quite a lot, 5 = Change a lot

The reliability of the instrument was measured using Cronbach's Alpha value. The questionnaire finally consisted of 10 question groups with 60 items. The Cronbach's Alpha value of each group is above 0.8, indicating a good level of reliability.

Data Collection and Analysis

The questionnaire in Google Forms was sent to students via their official email. The return rate for the questionnaire was different among the regions. The response rate in Hanoi was the highest while that in Vinh was the lowest (Table 1).

The data were analysed using IBM's SPSS Statistical Tool in three steps. Firstly, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to confirm the structure validity of the instrument. After eliminating bad items, descriptive statistical practices were applied to the data. Finally, the results of students' perception in 10 aspects were analysed to answer the research question.

Results

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

The data were divided into two groups: using nominal scale and using interval scale. For interval items (2.5, 4.1, 4.2), EFA was applied to confirm the validity of the questionnaire. A principal components analysis followed by a Varimax rotation was conducted on the students' responses (Table 3). After eliminating the destructive items, the final structure of the questionnaire was presented (Table 1). The reliability of each part was over 0.8. The instrument had 87% content validity.

Table 3: EFA result

	Component		
	1	2	3
2.5.1. Evaluating the education quality of the university	.900		
2.5.2. Improving teaching activities	.945		
2.5.3. Improving learning activities	.947		
2.5.4. Improving management activities	.936		
2.5.5. Improving support services	.927		
2.5.6. Complying with government regulations	.939		
2.5.7. Providing accountability to the government and society	.926		
4.1.1. Evaluation of teachers		.822	
4.1.2. Evaluation of subjects		.867	
4.1.3. Evaluation of courses		.871	
4.1.4. Evaluation of programmes		.826	
4.1.5. Evaluation of support services		.783	
4.1.6. Evaluation of facilities		.787	
4.2.1. Positive change in teaching performance			.849
4.2.2. Positive change in support services			.875
4.2.3. Positive change in testing and assessment			.860
4.2.4. Positive change in facilities			.861

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation.

a. Rotation converged in four iterations.

Descriptive Analysis

Quality Policy and Quality Assurance Models

Firstly, more than 80% of students agreed that their institutional policy focuses on the importance of quality assurance activities. ANOVA analysis was conducted, and the results showed no difference among students' groups divided based on ages and institutions' location.

The quality policy is a document setting out the objectives, principles, and regulations on the importance of current and future decisions related to quality assurance. First of all, 70-85% of students knew about their HEI's quality policy for the survey results. Students often have more accessibility to the issued documents than the developing policies. More than 80% of students thought that their HEI's quality policy had been announced widely. However, there was still a section of the students who had never known of the existence of these policy documents (Table 4).

Table 4: Institutional Quality Policy

	Do not Know	No	Yes
2.2.1. My institution has an institutional quality policy	13.00%	2.34%	84.66%
2.2.2. Our quality policy is clearly described in our institutional strategic plan (or equivalent documents)	16.63%	2.57%	80.80%
2.2.3. Some of our faculties/departments have their own quality policy statement(s)	17.31%	2.80%	79.89%
2.2.4. Quality policy is announced to every staff, lecturer and student	15.42%	2.95%	81.63%
2.2.5. We are developing an institutional quality policy statement	24.87%	5.22%	69.92%

The quality assurance handbook was the second term used to ask students about their higher education institutions' quality policies identification. The number of sample universities with quality assurance handbooks was lower than those with quality policy. Likewise, the percentage of students who thought that the HEI/ Faculty had a quality assurance handbook was 63% (Figure 1).

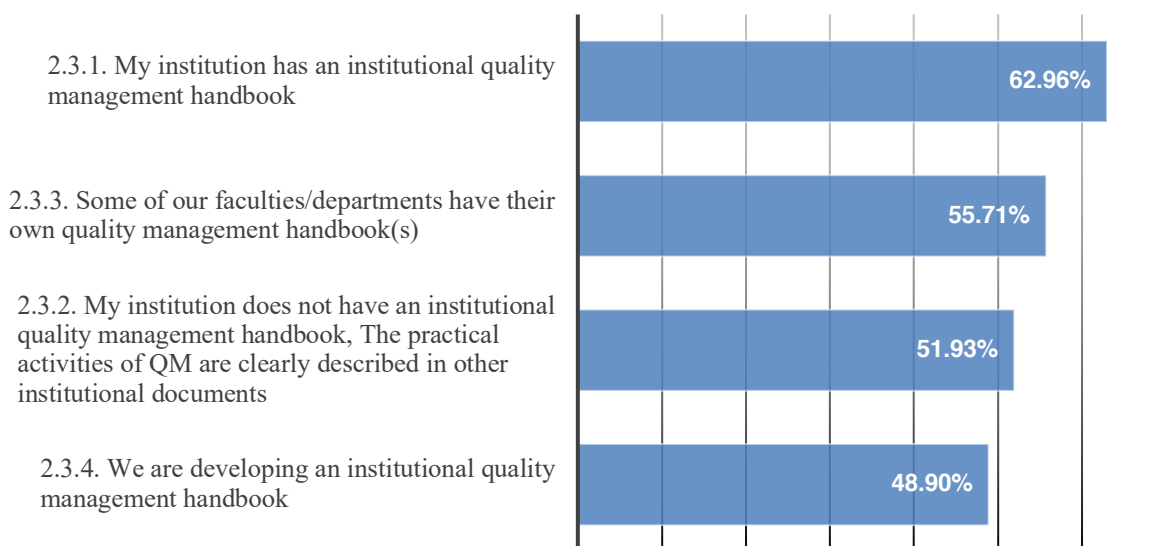


Figure 1: Quality assurance handbook

Thirdly, students were asked to share their familiarity with the quality committee or quality assurance staff at their higher education institutions. Around 20% of respondents said that they did not know anything about people involved in quality management. Only 60% of students had experience working with staff in the quality assurance unit (Figure 2).

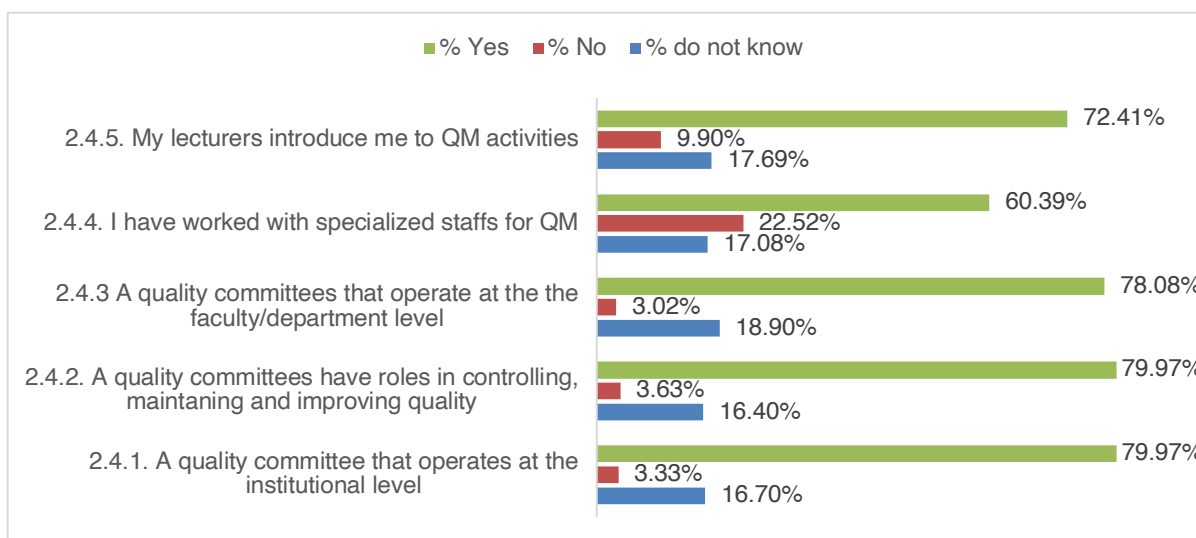


Figure 2: Awareness and experience of the quality assurance unit

To measure students' perceptions on quality assurance purposes, participants were asked to assess the importance level of seven quality assurance purposes. Mean rank with Friedman test was analysed, and the results showed that students thought "Improving teaching activities" and Improving learning activities" were the most important goals of quality assurance while "Improving support services" was less important (Table 5).

Table 5: Purposes of Quality Assurance

	Mean Rank
2.5.1. Evaluating the education quality of the university	3.94
2.5.2. Improving teaching activities	4.08
2.5.3. Improving learning activities	4.12
2.5.4. Improving management activities	3.93
2.5.5. Improving support services	3.91
2.5.6. Complying the government regulations	4.05
2.5.7. Providing accountability to the government and society	3.97

Similarly, respondents also pointed out that the teaching and learning areas were mainly focused on their higher education institutions' quality assurance (MR = 4.5). The attention for graduate employability is lower, at 4.11. International cooperation was listed as having the lowest concern (Table 6).

Table 6: The Focus Level of Quality Assurance

	Mean Rank
2.6.1. Teaching and learning	4.50
2.6.2. Graduate employability	4.11
2.6.3. Research	3.97
2.6.4. Governance and management	3.88
2.6.5. Support services	3.82
2.6.6. Facilities	3.99
2.6.7. International cooperation	3.73

Processes and Tools used for Quality Assurance

In the next part, the survey continued asking students about the quality assurance processes in their higher education institutions, which was related to three main areas including teaching and learning, graduate employability, and community services.

Firstly, to manage quality in the teaching and learning process, student surveys were used chiefly with two main contents: satisfaction (87.3%) and courses evaluation (89%). The assessment results collected from academic staff were the least used (75%) (Figure 3).

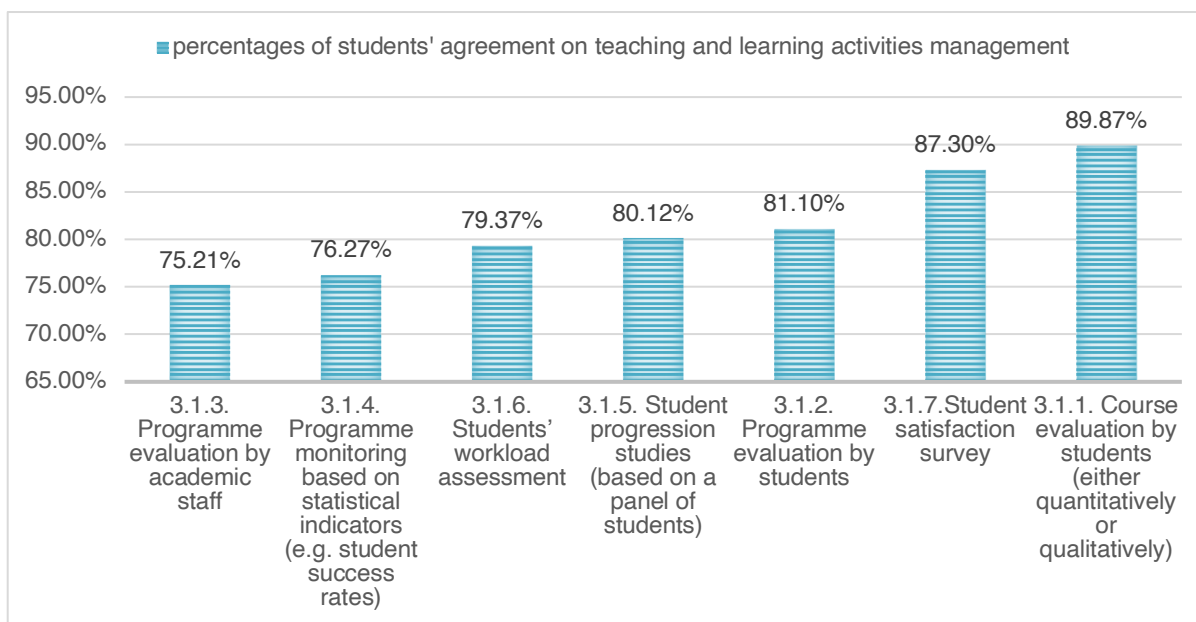


Figure 3: Percentages of students' agreement on their teaching and learning management

Regarding support activities, students were asked to assess the learning infrastructure that their institutions provided for them. More than 90% of students agreed that their universities took care of them with learning resources, and organised advising activities related to academic learning and credit registration. The percentage of students who received other activities was higher than 70%. The results also implicated the teaching and learning quality in those samples (Figure 4).

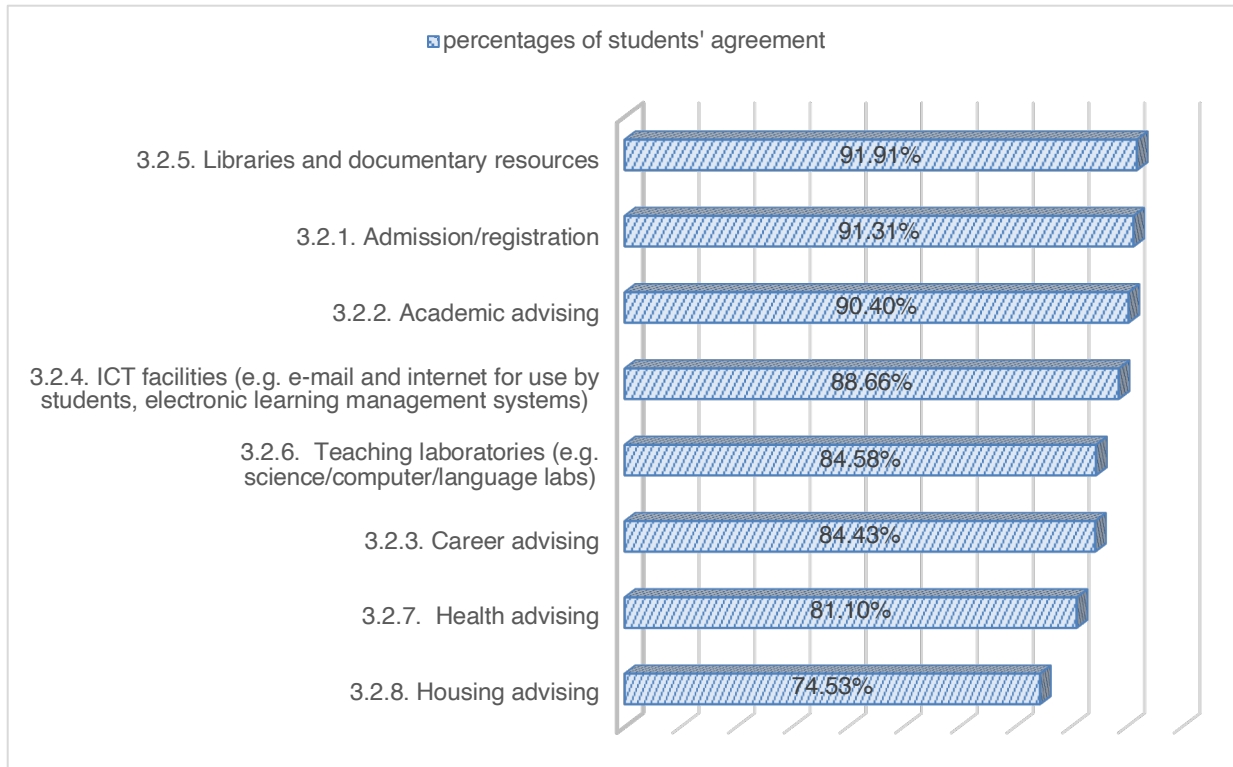


Figure 4: Percentages of students' agreement on their higher education institutions' support activities

Students also assessed the processes used for the enhancement of graduate employability. More than 70% of students agreed that their institutions had applied those activities (Figure 5).

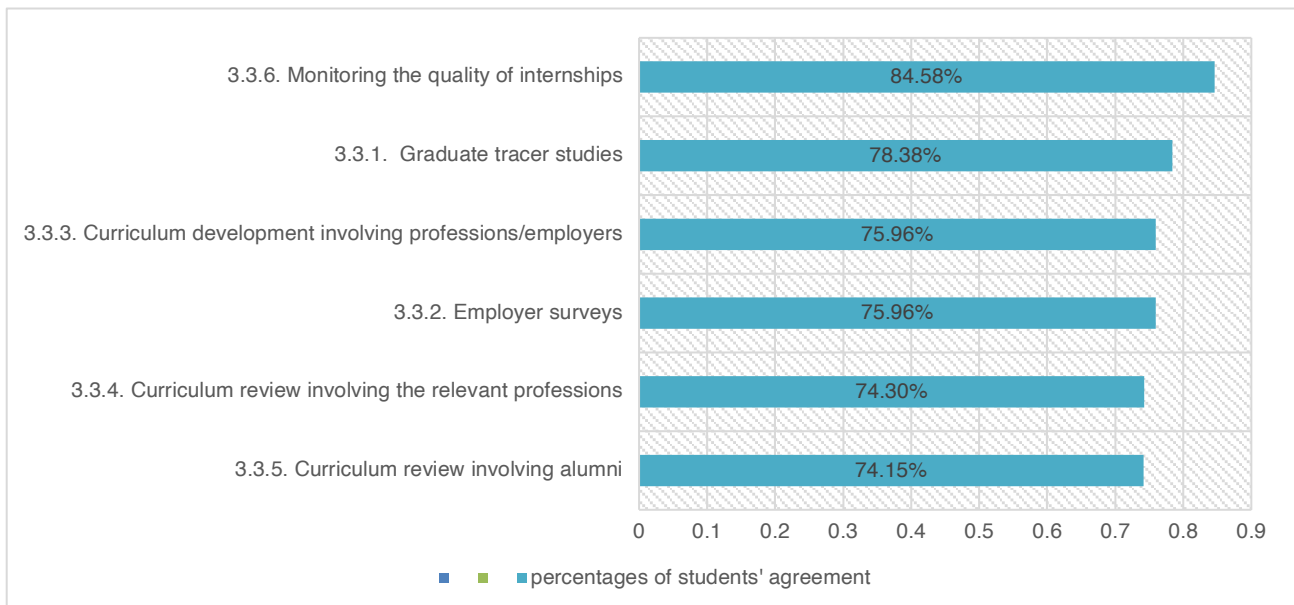


Figure 5: Percentages of students' agreement on graduate employability support

Information Administration

The survey is one of the most effective tools to collect stakeholders' feedback. In the current research, students were asked to assess the frequency of their institution in conducting surveys and the improvement level after implementing those tasks. The results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: The frequencies of surveys and their effectiveness

	Mean Rank		Mean Rank
4.1.1. Evaluation of teachers	3.63	4.2.1. Positive change in teaching performance	2.53
4.1.2. Evaluation of subjects	3.72	4.2.2. Positive change in support services	2.42
4.1.3. Evaluation of courses	3.69	4.2.3. Positive change in testing and assessment	2.55
4.1.4. Evaluation of programmes	3.45	4.2.4. Positive change in facilities	2.50
4.1.5. Evaluation of support services	3.20		
4.1.6. Evaluation of facilities	3.31		

Although they were surveyed about most activities (MR = 3), the students assessed those activities as having improved moderately. However, the survey results also showed a significant correlation between survey activity and the level of improvement in those activities (Table 8).

Table 8: Bivariate correlation between survey frequencies and its effectiveness

Correlations		4.2.1. Positive Change in Teaching Performance	4.2.2. Positive Change in Support Services	4.2.4. Positive Change in Facilities	4.2.3. Positive Change in Testing and Assessment
4.1.1. Evaluation of teachers	Pearson Correlation	.486**			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0			
4.1.5. Evaluation of support services	Pearson Correlation		.634**		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0		
4.1.6. Evaluation of facilities	Pearson Correlation			.574**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)			0	
4.1.4. Evaluation of programmes	Pearson Correlation				.603**
	Sig. (2-tailed)				0

Discussion

To have education quality, higher education institutions must have their institutional quality policy which is easily recognised by key stakeholders. The current study shows that the vast majority of respondents (85%) acknowledged the presence of their university's quality policy, and 81% of the

responding students indicated that the quality policy was clearly described in the institutional strategic plan. These data are in line with those of Martin (2018) who conducted an international survey to identify international trends and innovative practices for internal quality assurance. Regarding the quality (or quality assurance) handbook, 63% of respondents in this research confirmed its existence in their institution. This percentage is a little bit higher than that of Martin (2018) (58%). Additionally, responding Vietnamese students expressed their awareness of the quality assurance unit and/or quality assurance staff in their university. By law, all Vietnamese higher education institutions must establish a body responsible for quality assurance (Nguyen, Evers, et al., 2017). The fact that 80% of the respondents observed the quality committee operating at the institutional level and 60% of them had chance to work with a quality assurance specialist shows that the quality assurance body plays an important role in Vietnamese universities' quality management activities. In fact, a quality assurance unit is in charge of conducting a variety of activities including developing guidelines for internal quality assurance, preparing the institutional self-evaluation report, reviewing the programme self-evaluation reports, evaluating teaching, training support and research activities, and collecting feedback from key stakeholders (students, graduates, employers) (Nguyen, Ta, et al., 2017).

Among seven purposes of quality assurance, Vietnamese students ranked the three most important ones as the improvement of learning activities, improvement of teaching activities and compliance with the government regulations. Meanwhile, the three least important purposes of quality assurance were evaluated as the improvement of support services, improvement of management activities and the institutional performance assessment. These findings are slightly different from those of Martin (2018), in which the most significant purposes for quality assurance were the improvement of academic activities, institutional performance assessment and compliance with external standards. In a broader context, for example, the national or regional level, the main purposes of quality assurance could be quality control, accountability and promotion of continuing improvement (Colling & Harvey, 1995; Lemaitre & Karakhanyan, 2018; Morest, 2009). Furthermore, quality assurance activities can focus on different functional areas of universities. The current research shows that teaching and learning was the primary focus of quality assurance (4.5), followed by graduate employability (4.11) and facilities (3.99). This finding echoes Lemaitre and Karakhanyan's (2018) research that the first priority of quality assurance should be the content of teaching and learning. Moreover, higher education institutions must develop and maintain an employability focus across teaching, learning, research and community services (Greere, 2022).

Regarding quality assurance processes and instruments, respondents indicated that course evaluations by students, student satisfaction surveys and programme evaluations by students were the tools most frequently implemented in their institution. This study supports evidence from previous observations (e.g., Charteris & Smardon, 2019; Ching, 2019; Er et al., 2020; Heath et al., 2021). Specifically, students are often asked to give their views on a range of topics from teaching approaches to assessment methods in face-to-face learning (Charteris & Smardon, 2019; Stroebe, 2020) and online/blended learning (Harefa & Sihombing, 2021; Juraković et al., 2022), where they play an important role in providing feedback to the university as the quality of their training could consequently impact the quality of the services provided by the graduates (Ching, 2019; Er et al., 2020). In addition, quality assurance processes and instruments were witnessed in online and blended learning. In these modes of learning, students also participated in satisfaction surveys to provide their

feedback about learning materials, communication and teaching and assessment methods (Juraković et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2022).

For student support services, the majority of responding students agreed that their universities provided services like library resources and learning materials (92%), admission or registration (91%) and academic counselling (90%). The lowest percentage was for accommodation counselling (74%) and health counselling (81%). Student support services provided by higher education institutions should fulfill students' emotional, academic and social needs. They are a precondition for increasing students' welfare and academic success (Julal, 2013; Picton & Kahu, 2021; Sajiene & Tamuliene, 2012). For graduate employability, over 84% of the respondents felt that their university monitored the quality of internships. This was followed by graduate tracer studies (78%), employer surveys (76%), and curriculum development involving the professions/employers (76%). These results slightly differ from Martin's (2018) research that curriculum development involving the professions/employers was the most popular instrument implemented by higher education institutions to enhance graduate employability. In addition, enhancing the employability of graduates can be conducted through work integrated learning (Lyons & Brown, 2003), a service-learning approach (Mtawa et al., 2021), or providing soft skills to students (Succi & Canovi, 2020).

Regarding participation in evaluation surveys or student feedback, it refers to "the expressed opinions of students about the service they receive as students. This may include perceptions about the learning and teaching, course organisation, learning support and environment" (Harvey, 2022, p. 1). In the current study, responding students showed that they frequently did not take part in such surveys. The highest average score was for the evaluation of subjects (3.72 out of 5.00), while the lowest average score was for the evaluation of support services (3.20 out of 5.00). The low response rates in student evaluation surveys in higher education were also reported by Nair et al. (2008) in several Australian universities in the early years of the twenty-first century. The current study also showed that Vietnamese students did not see much positive change as a result of their evaluation. Consequently, the average score was 2.50 out of 5.00 with the highest one for change in testing and assessment (2.55) and the lowest one for change in support services (2.42). As suggested by Nair et al. (2008) the motivation for students' participation in evaluation surveys was that they needed to feel that their feedback made a meaningful contribution and that it was acted upon by their university. Similarly, Harvey (2022) argues that student feedback is a major subject that serves as the foundation for a basic investigation of what works and does not work for students. Student input is basically about improving the student experience at two levels: teaching and learning at the program level and general amenities at the institution level. Because the feedback is formulaic and no adjustments are being made, students' disinterest merely serves to emphasise the futility of the process.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Student participation in institutional quality assurance processes is formed and impacted by elements related to institutional culture, context, and resources, all of which are subject to influence and change. Students are in a good position to express their opinions and expectations about the programme, and they may confirm whether these have been properly understood, created, and implemented (Heath et al., 2021). Using a survey questionnaire developed for an international project, the current study assessed Vietnamese students' perceptions of and experiences with quality assurance. The research findings show that the vast majority of the respondents were aware of quality policy, quality

handbooks, quality assurance processes and tools implemented in their institution. However, they did not frequently participate in evaluation surveys, especially students' evaluation of support services. A possible explanation for this might be that students did not observe much positive change as a result of their feedback in the form of such evaluation surveys.

The current research findings can be compared with those of previous studies, particularly Martin (2017), who conducted a trilingual online survey on quality management practices, structures, processes, external drivers, and internal factors, and provided first-hand primary data on quality management in higher education drawn from the responses of 311 higher education institutions from all continents. However, the data of this research were collected from students studying at universities located in five major cities in Vietnam. It is recommended that further research should employ different sampling strategies to get data from more participants. Otherwise, the survey questionnaire can be adapted to be utilised in each university to get information on its students' engagement in and perception of quality assurance in its institutional context.

In addition, thanks to the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, many traditional face-to-face courses and programmes have been shifted to online and blended teaching and learning. Besides focusing on face-to-face training, quality assurance in higher education today also pays attention to online and distance education (Pannen, 2021; Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, 2017; Zuhairi et al., 2020). Consequently, future research can adapt the instrument in this research to survey students learning in online/blended courses and programmes. It will be interesting to compare results of students' engagement in and perception of quality assurance in face-to-face training with those in online and distance education.

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